

The Mask

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The Mask

by Anonymous

Summary

George just wants to see his friend's face. Even if it's not in person, a simple Skype call would suffice.

Dream panics.

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In which Dream fears he's ugly, George just wants to know all of him, and Florida is too hot.

A Boy and A Boy

Chapter Notes

Welcome to my hot garbage pile.

For a long time, I've been super against RPF in general just because I thought it was invasive and uncomfortable, but I recently started watching Dream and George and unfortunately, I couldn't help myself.

A couple disclaimers: First, **if either Dream or George ever say that they are uncomfortable with people shipping them/writing fanfiction about them, this will be swiftly deleted.** From what I've seen, they don't seem to have any problem with it, so it'll stay online for the time being. Second thing, please do not take this fanfic/ship too seriously. Shoving ships into people's faces is just bad practice in general, and is what typically what drives apart friendships and makes relationships tense and awkward. Lastly, this is a work of FICTION. None of this happened and shouldn't be applied to Dream and George's actual lives. I like to think of them in this story as fictional characters, completely separate from who they are as real people, because I don't ship Dream and George, the actual people—I ship their online personas. All of that being said, I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The only time it was acceptable to go outside in Florida was either in the dead of winter, when the rest of the country was draped in a thick blanket of snow and the temperatures in the Sunshine State settled into the low seventies, or early in the morning in summer, before the sun had peeked over the horizon.

That was a philosophy Dream stood by. The heat of a Florida summer was something that he had grown used to after living there his whole life, but that didn't mean he *enjoyed* it. He preferred the rainy hours, in which the sun retreated behind brooding storm clouds for a little bit, letting the gentle precipitation cool down the scorching heat. The rain would only last for awhile though, since Florida weather was spasmodic and could change from one hour to the next. Sub-tropical climates were like that, he supposed.

Unfortunately, rain didn't seem to be in the forecast that day. Even though the sun wasn't completely up yet, Dream could tell just by the lack of clouds in the sky that it was going to be another hot and humid summer day.

He was on the small balcony attached to his apartment, leaning against the metal railing and watching as pink crawled up the rapidly lightening sky. He clutched a cup of coffee between two shaking hands, occasionally bringing it up to his lips and sipping the bitter liquid. It had cooled down considerably, since it had been nearly two hours since he brewed it, but he kept drinking it, needing something to do with his mouth and hands.

His thoughts buzzed in his head like the cicadas in the trees, and the calm of the early morning did little to ease his anxiety. It was still there, turning his stomach and making him wish he could drown himself in his cup of coffee. He tried to keep his thoughts away from the source of his worrying, but like all intrusive thoughts, it wouldn't let him be.

"We should Skype sometime!" George said randomly, breaking the half-silence of the TeamSpeak call.

Dream blinked, stopping in the act of adjusting part of the thumbnail he was creating. He processed what his friend said, and pulled a face as he replied.

"Why? TeamSpeak has better audio quality, and I can hear you fine, unless there's something going on with it on your end—"

"There's nothing wrong with TeamSpeak!" George insisted. "There's just no video feature."

Dream froze, his stomach dropping. "I don't exactly need to see you while playing Minecraft," he laughed nervously, ignoring how fake it sounded. "That would probably be counterproductive."

"We wouldn't use it while we're making videos," George said, and Dream could practically hear the eye-roll in his voice. "Just when we're chilling. I know we usually just use TeamSpeak for that too but you know... I'd like to match the name to the face sometime," he finished with a small laugh, oblivious to the fact that Dream was suddenly having trouble breathing.

"Um," Dream said, trying to keep the nervousness out of his voice. "I'm not sure if that'll work."

"Why not?" George asked, bewildered.

"Uh," he scrambled for an explanation, "I don't have Skype on my computer."

There was a beat of silence, during which Dream cursed his stupidity and lack of quick thinking, and George let out a small laugh.

"You do realize you can download it, right? I thought you were the tech genius out of the two of us."

"I am the tech genius," Dream retorted, and George laughed again. "Leave me alone, I'm tired."

"What time is it there?" George asked. "It's just past eight in the morning here."

"Three," Dream sighed, scrubbing a hand over his face. "I'm gonna go to bed. I've been up too long."

"Okay," George said simply. "Are you free later today? I've just about finished coding the plugin for the challenge—"

"Nah, I've got stuff to do," Dream said immediately, before instantly feeling bad about cutting his friend off, and quickly tried to mend it. "Tomorrow would work, though. If you want to do it then."

"Works for me!" George said brightly, and Dream shut his eyes, thankful that George didn't take offense easily. "See you then, Dream!"

That was two hours ago. Now, he stood on his balcony despite his fear of heights and fought back the anxiety that threatened to overtake him.

Was it strange that he and George had been friends for nearly four years and neither of them had seen each other's face? Probably, to most people. To Dream? He'd rather it stay that way, perhaps forever.

It wasn't like he didn't want to see George. He wanted to see George so badly it was like a constant ache, one that followed him around and reared its head at the ugliest of times, like late at night

when he couldn't sleep, or when he thought of something that would make his friend laugh, only to realize that it was too late to text him, since Stourbridge was five hours ahead of Orlando.

He just didn't want George to see *him*, that's all.

Dream didn't think he was *ugly*, necessarily. Just... his nose was kind of big, his lips were a little on the thin side, and his body was lanky and awkward, his shoulders weirdly broad and his arms and legs too long. His teeth weren't great either—they were straight but he had a bit of an overbite, since his parents didn't want to pay the extra money for an expander after he had gotten braces. His eyes were a good feature, and his hair was okay on a good day, but he loathed his chin—it was clefted and whenever he tried to grow facial hair to hide it, it always grew in patchy so he had to shave it off.

It wasn't a big deal. It just sucked sometimes; he got nervous meeting strangers because he worried that they were judging him, but most of his friends were online anyways, so they didn't have to see his face. He thought he could get away with not showing his face to George, but he should have realized that his best friend would want to know what he looked like sooner or later.

Dream turned his face towards the sky, wishing for a breeze but getting a face full of stagnant air instead. Exhaustion pulled at him, reminding him that it had been more than twenty-four hours since he was last asleep, but he was too tense to sleep.

Maybe he'll forget about it, Dream thought to himself, watching as the first rays of sunshine peaked over the horizon, casting shadows onto the surrounding skyscrapers. *Or he'll take a hint and realize I don't want to do it. I didn't exactly sound thrilled at the idea.*

The thought of George completely forgetting about Skyping soothed his worries a little bit, and his hands slowly stopped shaking around his cup of coffee.

A ray of sunshine hit his face and he sighed, lifting his cup to his lips and draining the rest of the now cold liquid before turning around, heading back inside his apartment.

It was about to be too hot outside anyways.

—

A day later, when Dream started a TeamSpeak call with George, the anxiety returned in full force. His heart was in his throat when George joined the call, his stomach twisting into a knot.

"Dream!" George said happily, and the knot immediately unraveled, something akin to warmth replacing it. The corners of Dream's mouth ticked up into an immediate grin.

Dream loved George's voice. He remembered the first time hearing it, during a meeting with the admins on a server they helped run, and when he heard George speak for the first time, he immediately thought, *"that dude's got a really nice voice."*

Since then, George's voice has been one of his favorite sounds, even when he heard it screaming in his ears. "Hey," Dream said, smiling despite himself. "What's up?"

"Not much! I just went to the grocer's and cleaned my room. You know, doing adult stuff like the adult I am," Dream could hear the smile in George's voice, and not for the first time, he longed to see what it looked like. Did George smile with his whole body, eyes crinkling and teeth flashing, or were his smiles more shy, lips closed and eyes shining?

Dream had a feeling it was the former. George's personality was as bright as the sun—it only made

sense that his smiles were as well.

“Adult stuff,” Dream repeated, smirking. “And now we’re about to play Minecraft, which is arguably a kids game.”

“It evens out,” George said with a verbal shrug, and Dream huffed a laugh.

Their conversation was natural as they prepared to record a video, George telling him about how his cat is and how the cashier at the store was rude to him, and Dream found himself listening to his friend’s voice, trying to ignore how much he wished he could see the words coming out of George’s mouth.

I wish he’d never brought up Skyping, Dream thought regretfully as he launched Minecraft. *I was fine with just audio for years.*

He’d always been content to just listen to George’s voice, but ever since he mentioned Skype, Dream had found himself wanting to see what he actually looked like. Was he skinny, or stocky? Was his hair brown, or was it blonde, like Dream’s own?

Dream had an image of George in his head that he’d created over the years—he’d given George brown hair and hazel eyes, a medium build, and glasses that sat upon his nose. He had no idea how accurate it was, but every time he heard George speak, he always imagined lips that were as thin as his own forming the words, and it selfishly made him feel better.

“Dream? You ready?” George asked, making Dream jump a little bit, his cursor flying across his screen. “I’ve got everything set up.”

He cleared his throat. “Yep. I’m ready.”

—

A week went by, and George didn’t bring up Skype again.

Dream found himself relaxing more and more as the days went by, the conversation about video chatting pushing itself out of his mind. He and George talked most days, either over text or TeamSpeak, and everything between them was so normal that by the time the week was over, Dream had completely forgotten about video chatting.

Dream leaned back in his gaming chair, his back hurting from sitting upright while editing. He let out a sigh, rubbing his eyes. It was getting late again, nearly one in Florida, and he knew he should sleep, but George was still awake and talking in his ear, despite it being nearly dawn in England.

He’d stay on the call as long as George was awake. Even if he fell asleep in his chair.

He let his eyes drift shut for a few minutes, listening as George talked, noticing that his voice was lower than usual due to the late hour. He ignored how much he liked it.

“By the way, did you download Skype?”

“Mm?” Dream mumbled, half asleep in his chair.

“Did you download Skype?”

His stomach twisted a little bit, but he was so tired and content that the anxiety didn’t come. Actually, the idea of Skyping George, of actually seeing what he looked like, was quite appealing

at that moment.

He shifted in his chair to get more comfortable, his chin falling to his chest. “Not yet. But I will if you want me to, I guess.”

“I really want you to,” George said earnestly, and Dream smiled a little bit. “Download it tomorrow and we can try it out tomorrow night.”

“Mkay,” Dream sighed, nearing unconsciousness. “Sounds good.”

“Awesome,” George said, before yawning. “Jesus, it’s nearly six in the morning. I think I’m gonna go to bed. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.” There was a beat of silence, before George whispered, “I can’t wait to see you.”

Dream didn’t respond, for he was already asleep.

Chapter End Notes

As always, feedback is much appreciated! Comments fuel me, so feel free to leave some below. I should be posting pretty quickly, since this is the most inspired I’ve been in a long time, so watch out for new updates!

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Just Let Me Adore You

Chapter Notes

Thank you guys for all the kudos! I can't believe I got 140 on just one chapter, that's pretty awesome!

A quick note: I changed Clay to Dream, since I felt weird using his real name. I hope you guys don't mind.

That being said, this one's pretty angsty, but it'll get better, I promise. I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Dream woke up the next morning, his neck was sore and his ears were hot.

As consciousness returned to him, he realized that he was curled up in his gaming chair, his headphones still on his ears. Groggily, he took them off, slowly unfurling from his uncomfortable position. He rubbed his gritty eyes, somehow more tired than he was when he had fallen asleep, and stood, stretching out his legs and his back.

Sun shone in through his gray curtains, signifying another sunny day in central Florida. Joy.

The clock on his phone told him that it was just past eleven in the morning, so he went about his typical morning routine—showering, skipping breakfast and going straight to lunch, before sitting down at his computer and checking his emails.

There wasn't much of import in his email, but he did notice that the TeamSpeak application was still open from the previous night. He noticed that the call had ended at around one thirty in the morning, which he assumed was around the time he fell asleep.

His recollection of that call was a little hazy, since it had been so late at night and he'd been so tired, but he remembered hearing George's voice, husky with exhaustion, and it had been so soothing that he'd drifted off to sleep.

He closed the TeamSpeak window and started coding some things for possible Minecraft challenges, and by the time he was done, it was nearly three o'clock.

His back was starting to hurt again from all the sitting, so he picked himself up and begrudgingly went outside for a walk.

Walking every other day was a relatively new thing for him. He started doing it in January, after spending too much time sat in front of his computer starting taking a toll on his health. At the time, he would wake up late in the morning and then sit on his computer all day, either making or editing videos, until he eventually crawled into bed when the sun was rising the following morning.

He started waking up with headaches after a few months, and when he was editing, his vision would blur so much that he wouldn't be able to see what he was working on. He was exhausted constantly and couldn't concentrate on what he was doing, to the point of constantly dying in Minecraft.

George told him to see a doctor after he complained about it to him one night, and so Dream dragged himself to a general practitioner, unable to look at a screen without a headache. His doctor immediately told him that he'd strained his eyes and that he needed to take a break from screens for a little while if he wanted it to get any better.

He ended up taking a week off from doing anything YouTube related, and took up going for walks every other day. Routine was important to him, and he stuck to it.

Walking was less fun in June than it was in January, however. It was suffocatingly hot, humid to the point of it being hard to breathe, but he pushed through it, doing his usual route.

A mile into his walk, his phone buzzed in the pocket of his shorts, and he took it out with an extremely sweaty hand, squinting at the dark screen.

George: did u download skype yet

Dream nearly dropped his phone.

Memories from the night before starting flooding back to him, memories of George asking him about video chatting, and memories of him *agreeing to it...*

He had to stop and lean up against a streetlight, his heart rabbiting in his chest. Anxiety turned his stomach, and he took several deep breaths, trying not to freak out.

With shaking hands, he sent back a reply.

Dream: no not yet

Within seconds of him responding, George texted back.

George: dreammmmm whyyyyyyyy you promiseddddddd

Great. Just great. Panic choked Dream and he swallowed hard, feeling guilty as well as anxious now.

Dream: im out on a walk rn I'll download it when I get back

George: promise??

Dream shut his eyes briefly, head coming back to rest against the metal streetlight.

Dream: promise.

—

His walk was ruined after that, but he ended up cutting it short anyway after he almost got hit by a car.

George's texts had completely thrown him. So much so that he ended up walking onto a busy street without noticing, only realizing his mistake when a Toyota Corolla nearly ran him over, the driver honking frantically before slamming on their breaks at the last second, coming to an abrupt stop inches away from where Dream was walking.

He immediately turned bright red and apologized profusely before swiftly making his way back to his apartment, his legs shaking a little bit from both the anxiety that George's texts caused and the

adrenaline rush that he got when the car almost ran him over.

He took another shower when he got back inside, drenched in sweat from the Florida heat, before sitting down at his computer.

He had only been sat down for about a minute before his phone buzzed, and when he glanced at the screen, he balked when he realized George was calling him.

Dream could count on one hand the number of times the two of them actually talked over the phone, so when he saw the caller ID, he froze for a few seconds and debated letting the call go to voicemail.

He felt horrible about it a few seconds later, so he let out a sigh and accepted the call, holding his iPhone up to his ear.

“Hello?” Dream said, anxiously fiddling with a pencil.

“Dream!” George said, a smile in his voice. “Hey.”

“Hey George,” Dream exhaled, trying to calm down. “What’s up, why’d you call?”

“To nag you,” he said casually. “And to threaten you if the nagging doesn’t work.”

Dream shut his eyes briefly, his heart skipping a beat before breaking out into a sprint. “Right. You want me to download Skype.”

“Yep, and if you don’t I’ll literally murder you,” George said pleasantly, and Dream huffed a laugh.

“Yeah... I don’t know,” Dream said nervously, twirling the pencil in his hand. “I prefer audio chat.”

“But I want to know what you look like!” George said earnestly. “We’ve literally known each other for four years and neither of us have seen the other’s face.”

“I know, but...” Dream chewed the inside of his cheek. “I dunno, I guess I’m shy or whatever.”

There was a beat of silence, in which Dream’s hand tightened on the pencil, before George said quietly, “It’s just me. You know I’m not going to judge you or anything, right?”

Dream didn’t answer for a second, chewing anxiously on the tip of the pencil.

Rationally, Dream knew that George wouldn’t outwardly judge him on his appearance. He’d probably even say some nice things, like how he liked Dream’s hair or how his eyes were nice.

But Dream knew that every person judged others appearances, even just a little bit. He knew that the longer George looked at him, the more he would notice that Dream’s chin is weird, that his nose is too big, that his lips were thin, and that his shoulders were too wide.

Over time, George would find Dream ugly. And if there was one thing Dream knew, it was that no one liked to be seen with the ugly guy, no matter how big they were on YouTube.

“I know you wouldn’t judge me,” Dream lied. “I just don’t know if I want to, is all.”

“But why?” George whined, and in his head, Dream imagined his version of George pouting, thin upper lip tucked into thin lower lip, hazel eyes shining.

Because if I show you my face then you'll see how ugly I am, and then you'll slowly start to distance yourself from me and I'll slowly start to lose my best friend and—

"I don't—" Dream stuttered, the intrusive thought making him feel lightheaded.

"Please?"

George said the word so softly that it made Dream stop abruptly, the rest of his sentence dying on his tongue.

"I just want to know you," he mumbled, sounding upset.

Panic flared in Dream so violently at the sound of George's melancholy voice that his mouth moved without his permission. "Okay. Okay, I'll download it. We can talk tonight."

"Are you sure?" George asked, sounding unsure now. "I don't want to make you—"

"I'm sure," Dream declared with more confidence than he felt. "I've gotta eat dinner first, okay? And then we can Skype."

"Okay," George said, and Dream could hear that he was trying to hide a smile. "*See you soon.*"

Dream rolled his eyes at the bad joke. "Yeah, yeah. See you in a little bit."

He ended the call with a tap of the finger, and slammed his head down on his desk with a groan.

Great.

—

What the hell was he even *supposed* to do in that situation, he argued with himself as his mac and cheese sat in the microwave, slowly rotating. George had sounded so damn sad, and one thing Dream could never deal with was a sad George. No, George was meant to be smiling and laughing, was supposed to be the sunshine to Dream's clouds. George and sad didn't belong in the same sentence.

Of course he agreed to it. He couldn't deny George a single damn thing.

The microwave beeped, and he took out his food, swearing under his breath when he burned his fingers. He leaned against the counter as he ate it, taking small bites and chewing slowly to take as much time as possible.

Maybe George isn't attractive either, Dream pondered as he ate another forkful of cheesy pasta. *Maybe he's like me, nerdy and kind of awkward looking. Maybe I don't have anything to worry about, because if George isn't attractive either, than maybe he won't judge me. We would be able to stay friends.*

The thought calmed him a little bit, and he tossed his empty mac and cheese cup into the trash and slowly made his way over to his computer, dragging his feet.

Do it for George, he reminded himself as he downloaded Skype, watching as the progress bar inched its way across the screen. *George wants to see you.*

When the application loaded, Dream swallowed hard and made an account, before adding George as a friend. There was a little green dot next to George's profile pic, signifying that he was online, and Dream's heart leapt into his throat, anxiety twisting his stomach into knots.

U ready? George sent in the chat with a smiling emoji.

With shaking hands, Dream replied, *yep, go ahead and call.*

A beat passed, in which Dream sucked in deep breaths, his heart rabbiting in his chest, before they call sound emitted from Dream's headphones, and his face appeared on the screen.

His dread increased when he saw how bad he looked. He was wearing a relatively old blue t-shirt and his blonde hair was laying kind of funny, since it was still half wet from his shower. His nose looked especially big in the half light that his desk lamp created, and the shadows it cast made the cleft in his chin look like a chasm had opened up on his face.

George is going to see me for the first time and I look like I just crawled out of a sewer, he thought frantically, and in the panic that followed he clicked on a small camera icon on the bottom of the display, and as his webcam turned off his face disappeared, swallowed up by a completely gray, completely blank screen.

He let himself breathe for a second, panting lightly as the overwhelming panic began to fade, little by little.

He eyed the green accept button, biting his lip. *Maybe George is as ugly as I am,* he thought as he hovered his cursor over it. *He won't see my face, but I can see his. Maybe I'm freaking out for nothing.*

He clicked accept, and the second it took to load felt like a year before—

Oh.

His mental image of George had been wrong, then.

George, the *actual* George, had brown hair and brown eyes. His skin was unblemished, his chin perfectly normal. His nose was normal sized, his shoulders proportional to the rest of his sweatshirt clad torso.

With a sinking feeling, Dream realized that George's lips weren't thin like his own. Quite the opposite, actually—they were full, pink and soft looking, pulled over white teeth in a beaming smile.

He was right about that, at least. There was nothing shy about his smile—it was so wide that the skin around his mouth creased, his eyes shining with pure joy. As bright as a ray of sunshine.

The longer Dream looked, the more attractive George seemed, and before he could stop it, his throat constricted and his eyes began to burn.

George's eyebrows furrowed, his sunshine smile fading. "Dream?" he asked, confused. "I can't see you, what's going on?"

Dream's chest felt tight as he shut his eyes, clenching his jaw.

George is beautiful.

George is beautiful, and I'm not.

Without saying a word, he ended the Skype call, and George's face disappeared.

Chapter End Notes

As always, feedback is much appreciated! Comments are especially loved, since I love hearing what you guys have to say. I'll see you all soon!

All I Am Is A Man, I Want The World In My Hand

Chapter Notes

This is an ANGSTY one. Buckle up, everyone. It gets real sad up in here.
I hope you guys enjoy though :)

TW: BRIEF BUT GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF A PANIC ATTACK

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As soon as he ended the call, George tried to call him back.

He clicked the red decline button, biting down on his quivering lip. George tried again, twice more, and Dream declined him both times before shutting off his computer, feeling guilty and sick.

His phone buzzed on his desk violently, but he ignored it, instead burying his face in his hands.

Emotions battled within him and he took a deep, shaking breath, completely overwhelmed and trying his hardest not to cry.

What was he supposed to do now? He couldn't show George his face after he'd seen how perfect his best friend looked, it was completely out of the question. But... he'd just hung up on him and then proceeded to ignore his calls, and all George wanted was to see what his friend of four years looked like.

I need to talk to him, he thought suddenly, and his phone buzzed again. He picked it up and answered it, barely pausing to breathe. "George," he uttered breathlessly, bypassing hello entirely.

"Dream?" George sounded confused, and Dream was struck with the mental picture of George furrowing his eyebrows, lip pulled between white teeth. It made his heart race. "What's going on? I called you and it said you answered, but I couldn't see you and then the call dropped—"

"Yeah, sorry about that," Dream said, feeling weirdly detached from his body as he lied openly. "There's a pretty nasty storm rolling through. It knocked out my power."

There was a beat of silence. "Oh," George said, surprised. "Well, we can Skype on your phone, can't we? Just download the app."

"Yeah, I can't," Dream lied, heart skipping a beat in panic. "Uh, my phone's about to die. And since the power's out I can't exactly charge it..."

Complete silence followed, and Dream shut his eyes, the hand holding the phone shaking violently.

"Okay," George sighed. "We'll try another time."

"Definitely," Dream promised quickly. "I've got to go though, my phone—"

"Is about to die, right," George finished. "Okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow, I guess."

"Absolutely. I'll see you then."

“Bye, Dream.”

The phone call ended with a beep, and Dream exhaled loudly, letting his iPhone fall out of his shaking hand as he stared at the wall, blinking.

“Alright,” he whispered aloud, letting himself relax a little bit. He shut his eyes and leaned back in his chair, taking deep breaths to calm himself. His pulse was still fast, but it was quickly slowing as the perceived danger passed.

His phone buzzed on his desk, and he opened his eyes and lethargically picked it up, the sudden lack of adrenaline after the overload of it making him sluggish and exhausted.

It was a message from George, and he frowned as he opened it, confused as to why George was texting him after he just told him his phone was about to die.

The text wasn’t a text at all, actually—it was a screenshot of the Apple weather app, showing the current forecast for Orlando, and Dream was confused for about half a second before realization hit him like a freight train, his heart flying to his throat.

It ninety-one degrees and sunny. No storm in sight, and now George knew that, knew that Dream had been lying about the power going out, lying about his phone dying, lying about *everything*.

It wasn’t the screenshot that triggered the panic attack, necessarily. It was the fact that George didn’t send a message with it, because George probably hated him now, probably never wanted to speak to him again after he’d just blatantly lied to his face, and even if George didn’t miraculously hate him now that he knew his friend was a liar, he would later when he found out that his lying friend was also hideous.

His breaths slowly got quicker as he stared at the screenshot, and before long the picture was blurring and the hand holding it was shaking violently. Tears slid down his cheeks in rivulets as chills wracked his body, tiny convulsions rolling through him every few seconds. He grasped the neck of his t-shirt with a shaking hand, pulling it away from his neck and clutching the fabric like a lifeline. His lip was caught between his chattering teeth as little sobbing gasps escaped him, his heart beating so fast he could hear it in his ears, could feel it behind his eyes.

The sensation crested before diminishing, leaving him wrung out and exhausted once it was over. He got up on intensely shaky legs and stumbled over to his bed, crashing gracelessly onto his sheets.

He laid there for a few minutes, shuddering occasionally, before sleep took him, his mind quiet in unconsciousness.

—

When he woke up next, he woke up slow, his mind clinging to the last traces of blissful sleep. His body felt heavy and sore, the skin around his eyes hot and swollen, his mouth dry and tongue coated. The feeling reminded him of being sick as a kid, when he’d wake up in the morning with a fever and stay in bed all day, his mom bringing him cold bottles of water and peanut butter sandwiches with the crust cut off, drifting in and out of sleep for hours.

Except he wasn’t sick, and he wasn’t a kid. He was twenty years old, and he’d lied through his teeth to his best friend last night, and now George probably hates him.

The thought physically hurt. Dream rolled over in his warm sheets, pressing his face into the cool part of his pillow, letting his eyes burn but refusing to let the tears fall.

What was he going to tell the fans? ‘Sorry everyone, George won’t be in the videos anymore. I lied to his face and now he hates me.’”

And what was *he* going to do now? He was suddenly facing a life without George in it, a life without his laughter in his ears, a life without his beaming smile. A life of just rainclouds and thunder, with no sunny days, with no breaks in the stormy weather.

His future looked hideously, hopelessly bleak without George in it.

His phone buzzed next to him, caught in the warm blankets, and it cut through his spiraling thoughts. He fished it out, his sore eyes blinking against the bright screen when he turned it on.

It was earlier than he thought, only six in the morning, and the only message he had was from Sapnap, which lessened his anxiety and made it worse at the same time.

Sapnap: hey I’m free today and tomorrow if u wanna record/stream

Dream’s heart sank a little bit more, and his movements were slow and stunted when he typed a response.

Dream: idk I kinda fucked up

He set his phone aside and stared up at the ceiling, his stomach hollow. What was he going to tell the rest of his friends? Would they even *want* to remain friends with him after what he did to George?

His phone buzzed again, and he picked it up, briefly surprised at how fast Sapnap responded before he remembered that his friend had to get up early for work most days.

Sapnap: wdym you fucked up?

Dream bit his lip worriedly, unsure of what to say and how to say it.

He settled on something short and to the point.

Dream: I lied to George and now he hates me

Dream’s phone wasn’t even out of his hands before it buzzed again.

Sapnap: why did you lie to George

Dream sighed tiredly. He didn’t want to talk about it, but he owed Sapnap an explanation, so he typed out a summary of what happened.

Dream: he wanted to skype and I freaked and lied my way out of it

Dream: I got caught in my lie and now he hates me

Dream: and I lowkey wanna die

Again, the response was almost immediate.

Sapnap: has anyone told you you’re rlly dramatic

Dream scowled, temper flaring.

Dream: this isn't funny Sapnap

He waited for the text, but it didn't come. Instead, his phone rang, and he answered it, perplexed.

"Hullo," Dream answered, voice husky.

"You sound awful," Sapnap responded, sounding way more awake than Dream felt, despite being an hour behind in Texas.

"Rough night," Dream cleared his throat, trying to fix his voice. "What's wrong with texting?"

"I'm about to get into the car," Sapnap explained, and Dream vaguely heard the jangle of keys.

"And I want to know what's going on. You lied to George?"

"Unfortunately."

"Why? Because he wanted to Skype you?"

"Yep."

"So you lied about wanting to Skype him?"

"Not quite."

There was a frustrated huff on the other end. "Care to elaborate, Dream?"

Dream exhaled loudly through his nose. "Fine. George was bugging me to Skype him so I finally gave in, because of course I did, but he couldn't see me because I turned off my camera and then I panicked when I saw him and hung up." He took a breath, trying to calm his heart, which was racing once more. "He then called me because he was confused, and I lied and said a storm cut off my power, and that's why the Skype call ended." Dream paused, biting at his lip anxiously.

"And?" Sapnap urged, and Dream heard the sound of a car door opening and slamming shut.

"He sent me a screenshot of the weather in Orlando over text with no message attached," Dream said flatly. "He knows I was lying about the storm. So he hates me now."

"He doesn't hate you," Sapnap said immediately. "I honestly don't think George is physically capable of hating you."

"He does," Dream said miserably. "It's been hours and I haven't heard anything. I really fucked up, Sapnap."

"Okay, yeah, you kind of fucked up," Sapnap conceded a little bit, "but I do think you're being a little dramatic. He's probably just confused, man. I mean, you *did* just randomly dip in the middle of a Skype call and then lie about *why* you dipped. He probably just wants to know what went wrong."

Dream chewed his lip. "Then why hasn't he talked to me?"

"Probably because he knew you'd be freaking out like this and wanted to wait until you cooled down," Sapnap said, and in the background, there was the sound of an engine starting. "He knows you better than anyone, dude. Probably better than me, even."

"Yeah... maybe you're right," Dream conceded.

Brief silence fell, the only sound the gentle purring of the engine in Sapnap's car. "Hey, why didn't you want to Skype George?" Sapnap asked after a second, sounding genuinely curious. "You guys have been friends for a long time, I'm surprised you guys haven't done a video chat before."

Dream's insides twisted, his eyes stinging slightly. Because God, what he'd *give* to be able to video chat with George, to physically watch him laugh at something he said, to watch his eyes light up with joy, to watch his mouth curl up into that smile, that damn star-bright sunshine smile that he couldn't get out of his mind ever since he saw it for the first time last night.

Frustration with himself rose within, the sensation loosening his tongue, and the words bubbling up his throat before he could stop them— "Because I'm fucking ugly, that's why," Dream snapped, voice cracking halfway through.

There was a sharp intake of breath on the other end, "Dream—"

"I don't want to talk about it," he mumbled miserably.

There was another brief pause, during which Dream tried to control his emotions and his friend breathed quietly into the phone. "I think we have to talk about it," Sapnap said finally, sounding like he didn't especially want to. Dream knew his oldest friend wasn't one for touchy-feely things, so it was unusual for him to actually want to initiate an emotional conversation. "You're not ugly, man."

Dream made a noise of disagreement.

"Dream. Clay. You're not ugly," Sapnap repeated, sounding extremely serious and a little confused. "What's going on, why do you think you are? Is this a new thing or—"

"I don't want to talk about it, Sapnap," Dream cut him off, adding a little heat into his voice. "Seriously."

Sapnap sighed, knowing a lost battle when he saw one. "Alright. Just talk to George, okay? He probably wants an explanation."

Dream sighed. "I don't know what to tell him. I shouldn't have hung up, I could have said that my webcam was broken or something."

"That's still lying," Sapnap pointed out, and Dream rolled his eyes because okay yeah, he knew was a filthy liar that lies, he didn't need to be reminded. "Just tell him you have anxiety over showing your face. That's pretty much the truth."

Dream sighed again, rubbing his sore eyes with one hand. "Yeah, okay. I'll talk to him. Just... just not right now. He might still be mad and I don't want to make it worse."

"I doubt he's mad, Dream," Sapnap said tiredly. "George worships the ground you walk on. There's no way he'd be mad over something like this," there was the sound of an engine cutting off, the jangle of keys, and then a car door opening. "Hey, I've got to go, I'm at work. Call me later if something happens, okay? I don't have class today, so I'll be free any time after noon."

"Okay," Dream said quietly. "Thanks, Sapnap. I'll... I'll keep you posted."

"Alright," his friend said softly. "Talk to you later, Dream. Love you, buddy."

Dream's eyes stung again, his grip on his emotions feeble. "Love you too, Sapnap," he said thickly. "See ya."

The phone call ended, and Dream let his phone drop onto the sheets next to him. His eyes wandered to the digital clock he kept by his bedside, his gaze tracing the numbers six one five.

He rolled over and shut his eyes, burying his face into the cold part of his pillow.

Maybe he'd find the courage to talk to George after he got a little more sleep.

Chapter End Notes

As always, feedback is much appreciated! Comments are especially loved <3

By the way, updating should be faster, I was at the beach last week so I didn't have a ton of time to write. Thank you all for being patient!

I Know, I Could Have Said I Was Feeling Low

Chapter Notes

This one isn't as angsty, I promise.
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream woke up again around nine and didn't have the courage to talk to George at all.

He laid in bed and moped for a half an hour before actually getting up, eating slightly burnt toast with orange juice for breakfast before hopping in the shower, turning it so the water was scalding.

He stood in the shower and stared at the tiled walls, letting the water cascade around him.

He knew he was going to have to talk to George, but when? And what would he even say? The truth was out of the question—telling George that he was too ugly to show him his face would cause the same effect as actually showing his face, and that was precisely what he was trying to avoid. But he couldn't lie again, since that was what got him into this mess in the first place.

He was in the shower for a full half an hour and emerged thoroughly waterlogged and still without a clue as to how to handle the situation with George. He checked his phone as soon as he had a towel on and saw that he still didn't have any messages, and it both relieved and terrified him.

He went about his typical routine, checking his email and editing videos (the latter of which was ruined slightly that day, since every time he heard George's voice he got a little bit sadder), but he was distracted the whole time, eyes wandering over to his phone ever minute or so, anxiously checking to see if he was missing messages.

Hours passed with nothing from George, and around one he got a text from Sapnap asking how things were going.

Dream: I havent heard anything yet. Complete radio silence

He chewed on the nail of his thumb as he waited for his friend to respond.

Sapnap: he 's waiting for you to talk first dumbass. Text him.

Dream frowned, not liking that response.

Dream: what if he just doesn 't say anything :(

Sapnap: you 'll never know if you don't text him

Dream made a frustrated noise.

Dream: what if he tells me he hates me

Sapnap: oh my god dream text him for the love of god

Dream rolled his eyes, slightly annoyed, before sighing a little. Admittedly, he *was* getting tired of waiting, and it was nearing almost 24 hours since he and George had talked last. The urge to talk to him was getting stronger with every minute that went by. He'd gone longer without talking to George, of course—the longest had been about two days, when George was on vacation without good cell service—but they had been on good terms then. They were on strange, uncertain ground now, and Dream didn't know if not talking was making it better or worse.

The main issue wasn't that he was afraid of what George would say—though admittedly, he was still worried about that—he was afraid of what he, *himself*, was going to say.

He knew himself well enough to know that he got defensive easily and acted rashly when anxious or overwhelmed, both of which he was feeling at that moment. He was afraid that, if George was to raise an accusatory tone at him, he would say something he would regret later, worsening the situation.

This, of course, was assuming that George didn't hate him and actually wanted to talk to him.

Another hour passed and he got no work done, checking his phone nearly every minute and having a small heart attack when he actually received a message, but then being oddly disappointed when he saw it was from his mom, not George.

Two o'clock turned to two-fifteen, and he got up from his stagnant place at his desk and started pacing around his bedroom, debating on texting George or waiting for him to text, chewing his nails anxiously.

At two twenty-five, in an sudden surge of confidence, he grabbed his phone with slightly shaking hands and typed out a text to George.

Dream: can we talk

His finger hovered over the tiny blue send button as he bit the inside of his cheek anxiously.

Come on Clay, you coward, he berated himself. *Stop being a little bitch and send it. You won't get answers otherwise.*

He tapped the send button and then threw his phone on his desk, his heart skipping several beats as he backed away and began pacing again, breathing fast in panic.

Within a minute, his phone started to buzz furiously on the wooden surface, and when Dream looked at it, he saw that George was calling.

Panicked, he hit decline, not trusting his words or his voice.

His phone was silent for a second, before it buzzed once. Dream held his breath as he read the message.

George: I don 't want to talk about this over text :(

Dream swallowed back the guilt that threatened to choke him before he responded.

Dream: okay.

With shaky fingers, he navigated to the phone app and tapped George's contact, lifting his iPhone to his ear.

It only rang twice before George picked up. “Dream,” George said immediately, his voice lacking the usual enthusiasm it had when he typically talked over the phone, and it made Dream’s stomach plummet to his feet.

Fuck. “Hi,” Dream croaked, before clearing his throat. “Hi, George.”

There was a pause, during which Dream held his breath, before George said in a small, quiet voice, “What’s going on, Dream? What happened yesterday?”

Dream swallowed hard, stopping in his anxious pacing. “I... don’t know,” he managed, and he wasn’t quite sure if it was a lie. “I guess I just... panicked?”

George was silent for a second, and Dream could hear the soft sounds of music in the background. It made Dream wonder—was George on his bed, laying in the dark, listening to what sounded like Frank Ocean? Was he sitting at his desk, Minecraft open, using video games to distract himself? Or was he pacing like Dream was, in restless circles around his room, unable to keep his body still. What did his face look like right then? Was it pinched in confusion, or twisted in anger? Were his lips curved down in a frown, or pressed into a firm line?

“Why?” George asked quietly, eventually.

He sounded hurt, *genuinely hurt*, and every part of Dream recoiled from it. He thought of what to say for a minute, his brain frantically thinking of possible responses that wouldn’t either dig him into a bigger hole or expose all of his insecurities. “I’m shy,” he admitted. “I like just being a voice, you know? It’s... it’s easier. But I didn’t want to let you down, since I could tell that you really wanted to Skype, so I tried to do it... but I backed out at the last second.”

George was quiet again, and the silence was so unusual between the two of them that it made Dream’s chest physically hurt. Words threatened to burst out of him, like they always did, but he bit his tongue.

“Why did you lie?” George asked, a slight edge to his voice. “Why didn’t you just tell me that you panicked?”

“I don’t know,” Dream said honestly. “I didn’t want to disappoint you.”

“Dream, I wouldn’t have been disappointed,” George told him, frustrated. “If you would have told me you were self conscious, I wouldn’t have—”

“I’m not self conscious,” Dream interrupted swiftly, the lie slipping out from between his lips.

George huffed. “Yeah, okay—”

“There’s a difference between being shy and self-conscious, George,” Dream interrupted again, temper flaring and words flying out. “I’m *not* self conscious. Maybe—maybe I just don’t feel comfortable sharing my face to a stranger I met on the internet.”

There was a long pause, during which Dream’s quick anger vanished and was replaced by sickening guilt, and he debated throwing himself off his balcony for a good ten seconds before George said, in a small, meek voice, “So I’m a stranger on the internet now?”

Dream shut his eyes. “No. You’re not. You never have been. I’m sorry.”

George was quiet again, and it nearly drove Dream mad. “I might not be as big of a part of your life than you are of mine, but I thought it was reasonable to want to know what you looked like,”

George said, and his voice cracked slightly at the end. "I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable."

Dream's eyes filled with tears. "You didn't. It's my fault, not yours. You didn't do anything."

It was quiet again. Dream shut his eyes and made a decision. "I am self conscious," he mumbled. "It's why I hung up on you and lied. I'm sorry."

Dream heard George shift. "Dream, I would never judge you—"

"I know," Dream cut him off, knowing that George would deny it until he was blue in the face. "I know you wouldn't."

"Then... why?"

I don't want to see the disappointment in your eyes when you see that I don't look at all like you were picturing. I don't want you to stop including me in things, I don't want to watch you slowly pull away. "It's not... rational, whatever this is. It's not just being self conscious. I don't know how to explain it and I—" he inhaled mid-sentence, his heart racing so violently that it was making him short of breath. "I don't really want to talk about it."

"Okay," George said immediately, and then paused again. "Thank you for telling me."

Dream swallowed. "Yeah. No-no problem. Are we... are we good?"

"Yeah," George said softly. "We're good. I wasn't mad, just... just confused. I know now."

"Know that I'm a weirdo that won't let his best friend see his face?" Dream joked, but it fell horribly flat, and he cringed.

"You're not a weirdo," George assured, but it didn't make Dream feel any better. "It's fine, I get it. I just wish you would have told me before I coerced you into skyping me."

"You didn't coerce me. I agreed."

"Why did you do that if it was going to make you uncomfortable?"

George's question was quiet, and Dream sighed before answering. "Because I could tell you really wanted to Skype and I didn't want to tell you no. So instead I lied."

"At least you tried to spare my feelings," George said after a second. "I appreciate that. Just be honest next time, okay?"

"Yes, of course," Dream promised, finally letting himself believe that he was forgiven and that George didn't hate him. "I... I'm really sorry, George."

"It's alright," George soothed, and his voice dropped to a soft timbre. "I'm sorry if I scared you with that screenshot. I regretted it immediately after I sent it, I should have just called you back."

"You didn't scare me, it's fine. I was just kind of like, 'oh shit,'" Dream lied, giving a fake laugh. George didn't need to know that the screenshot caused him to have a panic attack—it would only make his friend feel guilty, and Dream was the one who deserved to be condemned.

They talked for a little while longer, just about mundane things like streaming and twitter, and Dream reveled in the sound of George's voice, something he was worried he was going to have to live without.

A yawn punctured one of George's sentences, and it made Dream glance at the clock. It was three-thirty now, which meant it was eight-thirty in England. "You tired?"

"Yeah," George admitted sheepishly, and Dream pictured a smile lighting up his features. It made the corners of his own mouth lift up. "I didn't get a ton of sleep last night. I thought you were going to text me and I was going to miss it."

"Yeah, I was too busy depression sleeping," Dream admitted, laughing a little bit to make his words seem less serious.

"I was surprised—you always have to have the last word."

"Yeah. I was in the wrong this time, so I let you have it. Believe me, it won't happen again."

George laughed—a happy sound, music to Dream's ears. "*That* I believe."

Dream smiled, his stomach fluttering happily. This is how it *should* be, just him and George, teasing each other and laughing. Nothing heavy hanging between them—just light, and happiness.

"I think I'm going to go to bed," George said after a few more minutes. "I've been awake for way too long."

"That's fine," Dream said, although he didn't want George to go. "I'll talk to you tomorrow. We can get started on coding that Minecraft plugin I was telling you about."

"Sounds good," George was smiling again; Dream could hear it in his voice. It made him giddy. "Talk to you then, Dream."

"Sweet dreams, George," Dream said breathlessly, and hung up the phone, stomach squirming with happiness.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for the awesome response on the last chapter! I woke up and saw that it had gotten like, 60 kudos overnight. It was wild.

As always, feedback is much appreciated! I'll see you guys soon!

My Heart is Buried in Cocoa Beach

Chapter Notes

This one hurts a lot. Sorry about that.
I hope you enjoy anyways :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Everything was normal for two blissful weeks.

The two of them streamed and recorded videos for their channels, as well as talked casually on TeamSpeak in between. Often, Sapnap joined them in their calls, and when he did it usually left Dream laughing so hard he couldn't breathe, George's giggles loud in his ear. When Sapnap didn't join them, the calls happened later at night, and consisted of them talking quietly about everything and anything.

Well, almost everything and anything. There were certain topics that Dream gave a wide berth, like anything to do with his appearance or being self-conscious. He was terrified that his best friend would bring it up since George, completely opposite of Sapnap, actually liked to talk about emotional things.

He needn't have worried. Days passed and George didn't mention any of it once. They talked about other things, like past relationships (Dream has had two girlfriends, one more serious than the other, and George had hesitantly admitted that he'd never been in relationship. Dream didn't tease him about it, it didn't seem right to) and past friendships (Dream told him that he wasn't popular in high school, having only had a handful of nerdy friends that stopped talking to him after he switched to online school. George said his high school experience was much of the same, except he kept in touch with a couple of his friends, and they hung out every once in awhile. Dream couldn't help but feel a little jealous).

Their conversations were comfortable, but Dream wouldn't let himself relax. He was overtaken with anxiety every time he started a new TeamSpeak call with George, worried that his friend was going to make him talk about his problems. Especially one night, when George spontaneously decided to post a face-reveal selfie to his Twitter. Dream was practically hyperventilating the whole call, terrified that George would try and convince him to do a face-reveal as well, but he didn't even suggest it.

June ended and July began, the heat of a Florida summer intensifying with every day that passed. He cut down his walks so that he only went one mile rather than two, and he always went back to his apartment covered in sweat and in desperate need of a shower.

The second Tuesday in July was a scorcher, temperatures soaring above ninety before lunch and climbing all the way to a burning one-oh-one. It was so dreadfully hot that Dream skipped his walk that day, knowing that it was a little dangerous to be outside in such extreme temperatures.

He wasn't having the best of days anyways—he woke up to his cat Patches throwing up on a shirt he had left on the floor, and he'd had to clean it up and toss the shirt in the trash. On top of that, the company that managed the water in his building was doing maintenance and therefore had turned off all the hot water, which meant his shower that morning was icy and unpleasant. All of it had left

him in a sour mood, and when he went on his balcony to see what the weather was like, the blazing sun and suffocating humidity only made him angry.

It was nice and cool in his apartment though—he had his AC cranked up to the highest setting, so he was comfortable in an t-shirt, hoodie, and shorts as he sat at his desk, checking his email before making a thumbnail for a new manhunt video.

He did that for a few hours, listening to a podcast while he worked. His day was slowly improving, and by the time it was three o'clock, his mood was lighter.

He got a text from Sapnap at ten past three, and he stopped in the process of editing to look at it.

Sapnap: have you been on twitter lately

Dream's stomach dropped to his feet. On Twitter? Oh *shit*, did he say something he shouldn't have? Are people mad at him? Frantically, he sent a text back to his friend.

Dream: no?? Are people mad at me??? Did I say something wrong??

There was a pause, during which Dream opened a new tab and went to Twitter, his fingers shaking a little bit, but before he could really look and see what was wrong, Sapnap had already responded.

Sapnap: no, you're not cancelled.

Sapnap: you might want to check George's tweets out though. Seems like he's discovered what flirting is.

Dream read the last sentence over again, eyebrows furrowing. George was flirting? *George?*

He immediately navigated to George's account, clicking on his profile and scrolling down to see his tweets, feeling slightly uneasy about it all.

His eyes widened at what he saw.

George had tweeted about ten times in the last hour, all of them responding to different tweets from this one girl, with the username ThatGirlVal. Dream clicked on her profile, having no idea who she is.

Her real name was apparently Valerie Davis, and her bio was simple—it just said that she was a twitch streamer, that she was twenty-one, and that she went by she/her pronouns. Dream clicked on her profile picture, his stomach twisting.

She was beautiful, of course. Her skin was pale and free of blemishes, her lips full and bubblegum pink. Her face was shaped like a heart, her cheeks rosy and soft looking. Her chin was normal, cleft free, and her nose was small and button-like. Her hair was dyed a soft lavender color, and her hazel eyes framed with thick lashes.

Dream clicked out of her picture quickly, suddenly overcome with anxiety. He went back to George's page, his eyes scanning the tweets.

Valerie started the exchange by calling him cute, and George responded to it by sending a blushing emoji. It went from there, this random girl sending flirty tweets at his best friend, who responded back in kind.

Dream's stomach hurt as he read the interaction, leaning back in his chair as he stared at George's

last response, which was just a winking emoji.

He felt physically sick, his stomach aching and his body feeling too hot. He wanted to call George and yell at him for flirting with this girl, wanted to direct message the girl and tell her to leave George alone, wanted to call her horrible names... and he was at a complete loss as to *why*.

He had no *ownership* over George. George was his friend—his best friend, sure, but that didn't mean George was *his*. George was his own person, free to flirt with anyone he pleased. It wasn't like... like they were *dating*, or whatever.

So why did it feel like the world was ending?

His phone buzzed on his desk, and he grabbed it absently, his eyes scanning a text from Sapnap.

Sapnap: honestly, good for George. It's about time he got some. And she's really cute.

Anger swelled within him, and he typed out a response.

Dream: idk what the fuck he's doing. He sounds like an idiot.

Jaw clenched, he crossed his arms, bitterness overpowering the sickness he was feeling. His phone buzzed again.

Sapnap: ????

Sapnap: uh okay

Sapnap: not the response I thought you'd have

Dream: why couldn't they have done this shit over dms? Did they really have to do it publicly?

Sapnap: chill out man it's just harmless flirting

Sapnap: stop being jealous

Dream reeled back, anger draining out of him quickly. Jealous? He wasn't jealous.

Oh fuck, *was he jealous?*

Dream: I'm not jealous.

Sapnap: Sounds like something a jealous person would say

Dream rolled his eyes a little bit at his friend's response, before he leaned back in his gaming chair, chewing on his nails and absently refreshing George's Twitter page, deep in thought.

Sapnap thought he was jealous, and okay maybe he was, just a little bit. George was talking to an extremely pretty girl, one who was also into video games and knew what it was like to be an online content creator. Girls like that were few and far between, so maybe he was just upset that Valerie was talking to George instead of him. That would make sense, right?

You know that's not the case, something within his mind whispered to him, and his heart skipped a beat, knocking the breath out of him momentarily. *You know you're not jealous because George is talking to a pretty girl and you're not.*

It had to be, though. It *had* to be, because the other option was absurd, completely out of the realm of possibility. It would mean that *he* was jealous of *her*, jealous that George was being stupidly cute and saying annoyingly endearing things to her instead of him. It would mean that he wanted George to flirt with him, wanted him to tweet at *Dream* with winky-faces and blushing emojis. It would mean that he wanted George, but not just as a friend. No, not like a friend at all.

Bingo, the voice whispered, and it sent a shiver up his spine.

A new tweet from George popped up on his monitor, and he held his breath as he read it.

GeorgeNotFound: you're cute @ThatGirlVal

There was a stupid meme attached to the tweet, one that was so *George* that it hurt, and the fact that George was sending this random girl stupid memes and calling her cute and being stupidly, idiotically adorable to *her instead of him*—

He wanted to scream. He wanted to throw up.

He needed to leave.

He stood in one movement, forcing his shaking legs to still and his mind to quiet. He tripped over himself in his scramble towards the kitchen, nearly falling flat on his face in his haste. He grabbed his car keys and wallet off his kitchen counter, threw his hood over his head, and left his apartment.

—

He drove for an hour and a half, heading towards the eastern coast of Florida. He originally didn't have any specific location in mind, but about a half an hour into the drive he found that he was unconsciously heading towards Cocoa Beach, so he kept on the 528, deciding that the beach was a good place to clear his head.

He was nearly there when he realized he left his phone on his desk back in Orlando, but he found that he didn't really care. It was probably for the best—he knew he would just be obsessively checking Twitter if he'd brought it, and the whole point of leaving was to try and get away from the situation.

He got to Cocoa Beach at around five p.m., pulling into a parking spot right near a beach access point. He got out of his car and was greeted with a faceful of mid-July heat. Knowing that he was going to overheat if he kept it on, he stripped himself of his hoodie and threw it in the passenger seat.

He walked down the half pavement, half sand path to the main part of the beach, suppressing his thoughts. He did a lot of thinking in the hour it took to get to the coastline, and he didn't want to indulge in his pondering until he was down on the beach and not at risk of running into something.

He kicked off his flip flops as soon as he got onto the sand, and he slowly made his way down to the shoreline, finding an odd sort of comfort in the salty breeze and the hot sand beneath his bare feet.

There weren't many people on the beach, due to the extreme temperatures and the fact that it was just about dinnertime, and he paid the few remaining families and couples little attention, intent on reaching the water.

His toes touched the cool blue ocean for a brief second before the water receded, leaving a plateau

of soft sand behind. He stood there for a second, before he decided to sit down right at the edge of where the tide rolled in, pulling his knees into his chest and wrapping his arms around them, not caring that the back of his shorts were suddenly covered in sand.

He stared at the cool blue horizon and finally let himself acknowledge the two things that had been screaming inside his head.

He was in love with George.

He expected panic to follow that realization, but found that all he felt was overwhelming resignation with an undercurrent of bitter loneliness and disappointment.

He felt like a part of him knew that he was in love with George anyways, just a part that he had been suppressing for a long time. George was such an important, vital part of his life—it made perfect sense that somewhere along the line he developed feelings for him. It didn't even matter that George was a man—Dream had never put a label on his sexuality, but he always knew he wasn't completely straight.

That was the first conclusion he came to. The second was that George didn't love him back.

It wasn't surprising. George had given him no indication of being anything other than straight and didn't even know what Dream looked like. There was no evidence that George had any feelings for him that weren't strictly platonic, and besides, he had pretty Twitch girls tweeting at him, outwardly flirting. He didn't need Dream, with his ugly nose and thin lips and stupid clefted chin. It was only a matter of time before he decided he didn't need Dream at all, not as a friend, not even for content. Maybe Valerie Davis would take his place, or some other person that was better than Dream in every way possible.

His eyes burned, and the cloudless horizon in front of him became blurry and warped. His hands moved from his legs to the thick, wet sand, grabbing handfuls of it and squeezing.

The water came rushing up again before fleeing back, leaving a polished, shiny stone in its wake. Absently, Dream picked it up and twirled it between his shaking fingers. The harsh ocean waters had eroded it so that it was perfectly round and smooth, completely free of flaws.

As he stared down at it, he couldn't help but wish the ocean would take him and erode him just like the stone, leaving him shiny and smooth, flawless and perfect. He wished it could all of his imperfections and grind them down to nothing, wished it could mold him into something meaningful, something beautiful.

Into something George could love.

Chapter End Notes

So every chapter I've posted I've posted on a Sunday, so I guess Sunday is my posting day now. I hope you guys liked this chapter, I had a different idea for what this chapter was going to be but I switched it last minute and I'm so happy with the results. As always, feedback is much appreciated! I'll see you guys on Sunday!

And At Once I Knew, I Was Not Magnificent

Chapter Notes

This is a day early! Big thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me with this chapter, and a few of the chapters before. They're the best. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream picked himself up out of the sand after what felt like hours, dusting himself off, and went for a walk.

He had no idea what time it was, but there were even fewer people on the beach and the sun was further down in the sky than it was when he first arrived. He walked aimlessly, toes skimming the edge of the water, hands tucked into the pockets of his shorts. The sea stone was tucked into his right pocket, and he fidgeted with it, twirling it between his fingers.

As he walked, he passed by a couple who were play-fighting in the sand, the woman throwing handfuls of the stuff at the man, who tried to block the torrent before running and tackling the woman, who shrieked as they fell into the sand. They were laughing, their young faces full of joy and love, and the sheer amount of happiness radiating from them made Dream look away, feeling nauseous.

Loneliness wasn't something that plagued Dream often, but it happened from time to time. He didn't have any friends in Orlando—everyone he talked to in high school cut off contact after he switched to online school halfway through his junior year, and he was far too introverted to go out and make friends. He always gave nightclubs a wide berth, not liking the atmosphere of sweaty bodies crammed together, dancing to trashy music that was way too loud. He had no idea how else to make friends as an adult, so he just didn't try.

All of his friends were online, either several states or an ocean away, which he didn't mind most of the time. He wasn't lying when he told George that he liked being just a voice—Sapnap was the only one of his friends that had seen his face, and he preferred it that way. He didn't even want to see his face, he wouldn't subject his friends to it.

Maybe it was because he was ripped raw by all of the emotions he was experiencing that day, or maybe it was because of the happy couple he just passed, but he couldn't help but feel dreadfully alone, and it made his chest hurt. He wanted physical contact desperately, even it was just a fist-bump from Sapnap, or a hug from George.

A lump entered his throat, but he swallowed it down. He had been near tears far too much already that day, no need to start crying over something as stupid as wanting a hug from someone who didn't even want him.

He ended up walking for a long time, and it was nearly dark by the time he looped back around to where he was parked. He walked back up the half sand, half pavement path to his car, dragging his feet a little bit. He didn't want to go back to his apartment, where his computer sat with George's twitter open, ready to break his heart once more.

He put his hoodie back on before he got into his car, took a breath, and started the engine.

He got back to Orlando at ten o'clock, having driven aimlessly for awhile before stopping at McDonalds for dinner, and when he got back to his apartment building, he spent five minutes sitting with his car off trying to convince himself to go inside.

He just... didn't want to deal with it. Didn't want to deal with being inevitably crushed after looking through George's tweets, didn't want to have to act happy about the fact that George was finally talking to a girl.

He eventually got out of his car and went into his building, before trudging to the elevator, pressing the button for the fifth floor. The doors closed, and he leaned his head against the cold metal walls, apprehension growing with each floor that passed.

He got off on his floor and went into his apartment, setting his keys down on the counter before staring at the door to his bedroom, stomach twisting. He took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing heart, and entered.

His monitor had gone to sleep in his several hour absence, and his phone was laying still on his desk, face down. He sat down in his chair heavily, sitting still for a moment, before sighing and wiggling his mouse, bracing for the heartache.

The page automatically reloaded as his monitor started back up, and a few more tweets popped up on George's Twitter. He held his breath as he read them.

ThatGirlVal: no u

There was a meme beneath the tweet, copying George's earlier one, and the sensation of bitter jealousy started again, overtaking all other feeling.

GeorgeNotFound: POGGERS

The corner of Dream's mouth twitched a little bit at that, despite the fact that he felt like crying. Only George would use twitch-speak when flirting with a girl. It was so dorky, so cringey, so... *George.*

ThatGirlVal: We should stream together sometime @GeorgeNotFound you could teach me how to beat Minecraft fast

Dream's stomach rolled, and he took a deep breath as nausea overtook him, the McDonalds he had just eaten threatening to make a reappearance. The thought of George streaming with her made his eyes sting a little bit, the sensation of *being replaced* almost too much to handle.

George hadn't responded to that tweet, so the conversation had ended there, and while it wasn't as bad as Dream had feared, he still felt like throwing something. He closed the browser, unable to look at Twitter anymore, and then stared at his desktop, chewing on his thumb nail.

His phone buzzed on his desk, and he stared at it a second, debating on just turning it off and not dealing with anything else that night.

It buzzed again, and he sighed. There might be an emergency, and he doubted he'd feel any better about the situation in the morning. It was best to just get it over with now.

He turned over his phone, and when he saw that he had ten missed calls from George and three missed calls from Sapnap, his heart sank.

Oh shit, he thought as he saw that he had thirty missed messages from his best friend. He saw that Sapnap had sent him some too, but there weren't as many, so he decided to read those first, a part of him wanting to be petty and make George wait a little longer.

It immediately vanished when he read through Sapnap's messages.

Sapnap: Bro why is George texting me saying that you're not responding (*sent at 4:14*)

Sapnap: I was just texting you like an hour ago (*sent at 4:15*)

Sapnap: Is this about the twitter thing? Are you mad or something (*sent at 5:17*)

Sapnap: Dude George is freaked (*sent at 6:10*)

Sapnap: Call me (*sent at 6:50*)

Sapnap: George thinks you're dead, he called me freaking out. I'm on TeamSpeak trying to calm him down. Join the call when you come back on, I don't know how to deal with George when he's upset (*sent at 7:56*)

Sapnap: I know you're not dead but you've got me worried too (*sent at 8:49*)

Sapnap: Clay. Call me. (*sent at 9:33*)

George had sent another text as he was reading through Sapnap's messages, and the, "*dream please say you're okay*" made him scramble for his headphones and frantically click the TeamSpeak application, putting all the feelings of jealousy aside.

He joined the call as soon as the app loaded, jamming his headphones over his ears.

It was silent when he entered the call. "Guys," he breathed, his lungs constricted with guilt.

"Jesus fuck," Sapnap swore loudly, and a slamming sound followed. Dream winced. "Goddammit, Dream. What the fuck."

"Sorry," he apologized, wringing his hands. "Shit, I'm sorry. I didn't think—"

"No, you *didn't* think. Jesus Christ, Dream."

"It was only a few hours," Dream defended weakly. "I—"

"Bro I've known you for ten fucking years— you *always* respond when I text, at least within a half an hour or whatever. And if you don't respond, you *always* tell me why. What the *fuck*."

Dream winced again, because yeah, that was true. He did always tell his friends when he wasn't going to be online, just so they wouldn't worry. It was a thing that started with his family—when he was a kid, he always freaked out when his parents didn't respond to his calls while they were out, and since he was an extremely anxious kid, he automatically assumed that they had died in a car crash or something equally as horrible. It sent him into fits of panic, going so far as to call 911 one time.

After that incident, his parents set up a system where they would let him know where they'd be

and why they wouldn't be able to respond. They made him do it too, since they worried about him as well, and it was such an integral part of his life that it felt wrong not to do it, even as an adult. He did it with Sapnap when they became friends, and then with George when he came into his life. It wasn't much, just a simple text letting them know he would be away from his phone for a bit, and they did it as well.

He hadn't even thought about it when he'd left. He'd been too concerned with himself and being jealous to think about how his friends would feel.

"I know, I know," he responded, rubbing his eyes. "I'm sorry."

"It's not *me* you need to apologize to."

It was then that Dream realized George had been silent since he'd joined. *Shit*.

"George?" he probed quietly, and was greeted by the sound of soft sniffles. Panic filled him so rapidly that it made him lightheaded. "George, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Please, don't cry..."

"Seven hours, Dream," George sniffled, his voice thick. Dream felt like the scum of the earth. "I thought..."

"I'm okay," he soothed. "I promise. I'm sorry for not telling you I'd be gone, it won't happen again."

"You scared the sh-shit out of me," George choked. "I thought something happened—"

"Nothing happened," Dream said gently, desperately wishing George was there with him. He could wipe his tears, could hold him close, could do something stupid to make him laugh. But George was across an ocean, so TeamSpeak would have to do. "I was being dramatic and went to the beach to mope. I left my phone on my desk."

George made a soft, sad noise, and the sheer wrongness of it all set Dream's teeth on edge. George was supposed to be happy, was supposed to be the sunshine to Dream's clouds. It wasn't right to hear him cry. "I'm here, George," Dream said softly. "I'm right here, okay? I'm not going anywhere."

George made another sound, this one closer to a sob. It made Dream's chest hurt. "Sorry," George mumbled thickly. "I'm being an idiot."

"You have no reason to apologize. This was completely, one-hundred percent my fault. I should have told you guys that I'd be away."

He expected Sapnap to respond to that, but a quick glance at his monitor told him that he'd left the call a few minutes ago, no doubt to give the two of them privacy. For some reason, knowing that Sapnap was gone and that it was just him and George put him more at ease.

It was silent for a moment, George's soft sobs and sniffles quieting, and Dream stared up at his ceiling, thinking about how bad of a person he was.

"Are you okay?" Dream questioned softly, breaking the silence.

"Yeah," George said hoarsely. "Sorry. I didn't mean to cry."

"It's alright. I'm sorry for making you cry."

“It’s okay. Just... don’t leave again. That was scary.”

“I won’t. I shouldn’t have done it in the first place, I was being stupid.”

“Why did you leave?” George asked quietly. “You don’t usually do stuff like that.”

Dream’s stomach swooped. “I was just... overwhelmed. So I went to the beach.”

“Did it help?”

Dream thought of how he felt when he read through the tweets between George and Valerie, and he felt nauseous again. “Not really.”

“Maybe I can help,” George offered with so much conviction that it made Dream huff incredulously, because even after he made him cry, George still wanted to make *him* feel better.

God. He envied the woman who would one day own his best friend’s heart, for he’d never met someone with one as big and full of love as George’s, and he doubt he would again.

“Nah, it’s something that can’t be fixed,” Dream sighed, picking at his nails and fighting to keep his voice steady and devoid of emotion. “Thanks for offering, though. Uh... so—so what’s this I hear about you and a pretty girl talking on twitter?”

He tried to pump his voice full of enthusiasm and innuendo, and he thought he did a pretty decent job. He wanted to make it seem like he was excited for George, rather than hopelessly jealous.

“Oh, that,” George shrugged, like it wasn’t a big deal that he was talking to a pretty gamer girl.

“Yeah, that!” Dream exclaimed. “What’s going on with that? Are you... are you guys, like, talking?” His tone wavered a little bit towards the end of the sentence, and he hoped George didn’t notice.

“Not really. I was kind of too focused on why you weren’t answering to really pay attention to it, to be honest,” George laughed. “She’s cool, I guess. I don’t know.”

“You should go for it,” Dream said, the words flying out of his mouth before he could stop them. “She’s... she seems cool. And she’s pretty. You should go for it.”

“I don’t know,” George said uneasily. “I’m not sure if I—”

“Dude, why not? She’s a gamer, she’s pretty, she’s—”

“Why do you keep saying that she’s pretty?” George interrupted warily. “I don’t care what she looks like. I don’t... I don’t just like people based on their outward appearance, and I don’t know anything about her other than the fact that she’s a streamer. I’m not... I’m just not sure if I want my first relationship to be with a girl who just finds me cute.”

Dream opened his mouth to respond to that, but slowly let it shut, processing what George was saying.

I don’t care what she looks like. I don’t just like people based on their outward appearance.

If... if he didn’t care what she looked like, maybe he wouldn’t care about what Dream looked like either.

Maybe he was hiding his face for nothing.

Dream swallowed around his dry throat, his heart pounding. “H-Hey George,” Dream stammered, speaking before he over thought was he was about to do.

“Yeah?”

“Do you... do you want to Skype right now?”

Chapter End Notes

I need to learn to just not set an update schedule. I literally never follow it. I said this was going up on Sunday, but I got impatient, so you all get it on a Saturday. As always, feedback is much appreciated! I'll see you guys next week!

Put a Price on Emotion

Chapter Notes

New chapter! I hope you guys enjoy it!

Once again, big thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me with this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Do you... do you want to Skype right now?”

“What?” George gawked. “*You want to Skype? Now?*”

“Yes,” Dream said, already starting to regret suggesting it. He chewed the inside of his cheek nervously. “I think so.”

George was quiet for a second, before he hesitantly asked, “Are—are you sure? You don’t have to if it’s going to make you uncomfortable.”

“I’m sure,” Dream affirmed, taking a breath. His heart was starting to race, but he chose to ignore it. “Alright, let’s do this.”

“I’m going to get set up,” George told him, excitement seeping into his voice. “Call me when you’re ready, alright?”

Oh god. “Yep. See you in a few,” Dream said, and ended the TeamSpeak call. Silence filled his ears, and when he let out a sigh, it was strangely loud.

He redownloaded Skype, having deleted it after the last failed attempt, and sat there in a strange state of shock as the progress bar inched across the screen.

He was actually going to do it. He was going to show George his face.

His stomach flipped anxiously, and he swallowed convulsively, starting to feel panicked and trapped once more. He fiddled around with the rock he got from the beach in his pocket, running his fingers over its smooth, flawless surface. Its perfection was mocking him.

George’s going to take one look at you and hang up, something within the deep recesses of his mind whispered, and it made his heart start to race. He clenched his fist around the rock, biting his lip. He’s going to be so disappointed when you don’t look like he expected, he’s not going to want to talk to you anymore.

Skype downloaded and immediately launched, but he didn’t even notice, too busy trying not to have a panic attack as intrusive thoughts pushed their way into his mind, slowly forcing everything else he was thinking of out. He hovered his mouse over the tiny x in the corner of his browser, tempted to close it and forget he ever suggested it.

Instead, he gathered up all of the courage he possessed, gritted his teeth, and clicked the call button.

His bravery vanished as the calling screen opened, and panic overtook him once more, all rational

thoughts leaving his brain. Frantically, he clicked the ‘turn video off’ button, making a strange strangled noise as he did so.

The call was answered seconds later. It took a few moments to load, but as soon as it did, the entirety of Dream’s monitor was filled with George.

He was wearing a gray hoodie—his own merch, it looked like, which was so endearing that it made Dream’s heart melt a little bit. He was wearing his headphones atop his brown hair, which looked disheveled and messy, almost like he had ran his fingers through it too many times. His whites of his eyes were a little pink, and the skin around them slightly puffy, his full lips red and swollen from crying.

He was smiling, though—smiling that damn sunshine smile that was so bright it made Dream want to look away, because he didn’t deserve that smile. Didn’t deserve it after being such a coward.

The smile dimmed slightly as George’s eyebrows furrowed, but it was still there when he asked, “Dream?”

Dream struggled to find his voice. “Y-Yeah, I’m here. I…” he cut off, not knowing what to say.

“No video?” George asked lightly, but he sounded slightly disappointed.

Dream’s mouth dried up. “I…”

George looked at him through the screen, brown eyes big and earnest. “I’d never judge you. Never, Dream, you know that?”

Dream’s eyes filled with tears. “I… I know. I just… I can’t,” he said desperately, his breath stuttering in his chest. “I can’t.”

“Okay,” George said softly, nodding. “That’s okay, Dream. I don’t need to know what you look like.”

“But you *should*,” Dream protested, his voice shaking. “I’ve known you for nearly four years, George, and you haven’t seen my *face*.”

“I don’t need to,” George insisted. “I know who you are, Dream. I don’t need to see what you look like.”

Dream clenched his jaw, a strange anger replacing the anxiety. A simple click of a button would let George see his face, would make George *happy*—yet he couldn’t bring himself to do it. It was so ridiculous, so irrational, so *selfish* that it made him physically angry. He wished there was a way for him to force himself to show his face to George, a way that he couldn’t weasel out of.

An idea popped into his head—one that he hadn’t let himself consider before, and he grasped onto it before he could talk himself out of it. “George,” he said suddenly. “Do you have any plans for the end of July?”

George’s eyebrows shot up. “Uh, no?”

“Perfect,” Dream breathed, minimizing Skype so that George was a small square in the corner of his screen and opening up his internet browser, typing ‘*British Airlines*’ into the search bar.

“Dream, what’s going on? What are you doing?” George sounded confused, and Dream looked down at the little square in the corner of his screen, where George was frowning.

“How—” he cut off, taking a deep breath. “How would you feel about visiting me for a week or so?”

George’s eyes widened, his jaw dropped. “*What? Really?*”

“Yeah,” Dream said, scrolling down the page and looking at available flights. “I can’t force myself to show you my face over Skype, but in person I won’t have a choice.”

George was quiet for a second, chewing on his lower lip, and Dream found him eyes tracking the movement, unable to look away. George opened his mouth to say something, closed it, and then opened it again. “Dream, you don’t need to do this. I don’t need to know what you look like—”

“But you *should* know what I look like,” Dream interrupted. “It’s not fair to you—”

“But it’s going to cause you anxiety, and I don’t want that—”

“It won’t,” Dream stated firmly. “And besides... I want to see you. In person.”

George’s mouth twitched, and he looked away from his camera and down at his lap, a shy smile shattering his previously serious expression.

As he watched George try to mold his face back into something more stoic, Dream couldn’t help but notice how adorable George’s expression was, and once the smile vanished, Dream longed for it to return.

“Are you sure?” George asked finally. “I don’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“I’m never uncomfortable around you,” Dream promised, trying to sound as sincere as possible to see if it would cause a reaction.

It did—color rushed into George’s cheeks, his mouth quirking up into another sunshine smile. Dream grinned, pleased with himself. He scrolled further down the page, finding a flight from London Gatwick to Orlando International on the twenty-first of July. He booked the flight, upgraded George to first class, and put in his credit card information.

“Alright, you’ve got a flight to Orlando on the twenty-first,” Dream informed George. “British Airlines, first class.”

“*First class?*” George gasped, eyes going wide. “Wait—you paid for my ticket?”

“Of course,” Dream shrugged. “It wasn’t too much—”

“Dream!” George interrupted, sounding scandalized. “No, I’ll pay you back. How much was it? Jesus, *first class?*”

“No, you’re not paying me back,” Dream disagreed. “I’m the one who wants you to come visit, so I’m paying.”

“No. I’m paying you back, Dream, that’s so much money! I could have bought my own ticket—”

“It’s done, George,” Dream said with a note of finality. “It’s fine, I wanted to do it. You’re paying me back with your presence.”

George sighed. “At least let me, like, buy you dinner or something. We can go somewhere expensive, that way I can pay you back for some of—”

“George, are you asking me out on a date?” Dream gasped theatrically, hoping to make George blush again. “I had no idea you felt that way.”

It worked. George’s cheeks turned pink once more, and he rolled his eyes. “It’s not a date, you arse, I just want to pay you back.”

But what if I want it to be a date— “Fine, fine. You can take me out to dinner when you get here,” Dream surrendered. “I know of some fancy places, we can try one of those.”

“Perfect.”

George fell silent after that, and a quick look at him showed that he was staring off at something that Dream couldn’t see, a strange expression on his face. Dream furrowed his eyebrows, confused about his friend’s sudden change in mood. “George? You alright?”

George looked back at his webcam with a watery smile, his eyes over-bright and suddenly filled with moisture. “I can’t believe I’m finally going to meet you,” he admitted, his voice breaking halfway through. A tear rolled down his cheek, but his smile didn’t falter.

Dream’s heart did something strange in his chest, and he once again longed to be there with George. He often prided himself on being good with words, but at that moment he couldn’t find the right ones, and he longed to just give George a hug. “George,” he said helplessly, completely at a loss.

“Sorry, sorry I’m just really tired,” George stuttered, wiping his cheeks with the sleeves of his sweatshirt. “Today was... today was stressful.”

Dream winced. “My fault, I should have taken my phone with me. It was so fucking selfish, George, I’m so sorry.”

“I was stressed before that because of the whole flirting thing,” George dragged his sweatshirt over his eyes, and Dream bit his lip, the wish to hold him unbearably strong. “It’s stupid.”

“Why were you stressed out about the flirting?” Dream asked softly, not wanting to upset George any further when he was hurting like this. “You don’t have to pursue it if you don’t want to, there’s no pressure—”

“I know, I know. It was just very... very public and I’ve never been in a relationship before and...” he took a shuddering breath, wiping his eyes again. “I don’t know. It’s stupid.”

“Stop that,” Dream whispered. “It’s not stupid.”

George sniffed. “Sorry,” he mumbled. “I’m being overemotional.”

“I think you need to sleep,” Dream said quietly. “It’s nearly eleven here, so it’s almost four there.”

“Y-Yeah,” George hiccuped, nose red and face blotchy. “I’m gonna go to bed.”

“Okay,” Dream said softly. “Goodnight, Georgie. I’ll call you tomorrow, okay? We can talk about stuff we want to do when you’re here.”

George nodded, and he looked directly at Dream, eyelashes wet and eyes slightly red. “Okay. Goodnight, Dream. I... I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

George ended the Skype call a second later, but Dream sat at his desk and stared at his screen for

several minutes after, because all of the doubts that had been circling his mind about his feelings for George had flown out the window the second he saw his mouth form the word “Dream.”

His phone buzzed on his desk, and he turned it over, reading the notification.

George: Sorry for being emo lol

George: Thanks for buying my plane ticket again

George: I can't wait to see you

Dream read the messages over and over, before sighing and laying his phone on his chest, his mouth unconsciously curling into a small smile.

I can't wait to see you too.

Chapter End Notes

Things are heating up... and poor George, he's really going through something, isn't he? Wonder what it could be...

Thank you guys for all of your support-- the amount of love that last chapter got is just insane. It really made my shitty week a lot better.

As always, feedback is much appreciated! I will see you guys in a week!

But If You Leave Me I'd Hello Goodbye, and I Don't Shine at Night — Look, I'm a Dead Man

Chapter Notes

This is... very long and very angsty. Definitely the angstiest chapter so far, and probably will be the angstiest chapter in this fic. Fair warning: it's going to hurt. Thank you so much to my fabulous beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me with this. Seriously, this one couldn't have gotten done without them. They're the best. Enjoy!

WARNING: THIS CHAPTER INCLUDES A GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF A PANIC ATTACK.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next couple of days were normal, or as normal as they could be after realizing that you were in love with your best friend.

He called George the morning after the Skype call, and while he sounded a little bit better than he did the night before, he still seemed to be a bit off. He was really quiet, which meant that Dream had to be twice as loud, and even though George was a little somber and only spoke a little, Dream still managed to make him laugh twice, and he counted that a win.

He settled back in his routine, going for his walks and doing YouTube things in between, and he forced himself not to think about the fact that George was going to see his face, in person, in two weeks. He made the mistake of thinking about it one night before bed, and it made him restless and anxious all night. After that, he pushed it into the back of his mind, because if he didn't think about it, it didn't exist.

Minecraft Championship was that Saturday, and he was teamed with George, Sapnap, and another popular streamer. They came in third, much to Dream's disappointment—he wanted to *win*, wanted to feel the rush of victory, but instead was faced with crushing dissatisfaction and the wretched feeling of failure.

It wasn't all bad, though. That night, he ended up watching the video of George's stream hours after it ended, curled up in his bed. It was the first stream George had done with a face-cam, and Dream found himself only staring at George, noticing how his eyes crinkled every time he laughed, how he bit his soft lower lip when he concentrated. He watched the entire stream, and when it ended he felt oddly lonely.

He didn't dwell on it too long, though, because suddenly it was Tuesday again, and he was facing the fact that George would be there in a week.

He chose not to think of it again, dismissing it as still too far away to worry about. He was fine on Wednesday as well, a little bit less fine on Thursday, and was starting to feel slightly anxious on Friday. It was four days away, though—that was still a good chunk of time. He didn't have to worry about it yet.

Friday night, however, was possibly one of the worst nights of his life.

He had been up until nearly five in the morning the night before streaming with George and Sapnap on the SMP server, so he was exhausted when he crawled into bed that night around eleven. He didn't fall asleep right away like he was expecting, however—he stayed awake for hours into the night, staring at his ceiling and then at his walls and trying his hardest not to think about the fact that in three short days, George would be seeing his face. His ugly, ugly face.

He started getting a headache from laying down for too long at about two in the morning, but he was feeling too apathetic to get up, so he just let his head pound as he let his eyes slowly close, his mind going finally, blissfully blank.

He dreamt vividly and colorfully. He dreamt of airports and airplanes, of the afternoon heat in a Florida summer. He dreamt of George, of his bright eyes and soft lips, of disgusted looks and retreating backs. He dreamt of idle feet, of tearful eyes staring as his best friend left the way he came, of the sound of his luggage rolling across the linoleum floor.

He dreamt of nausea, growing in the pit of his stomach, making him sicker and sicker and sicker...

He woke suddenly and violently, covered in sweat and tangled in his sheets, breaths rushing in and out of his lungs. His head pounded violently, the deep pain making his stomach lurch. He struggled out of his linen prison and ran to the bathroom.

He spent the next few hours pressed into the space in between his toilet and bathtub, his headache mixed with the anxiety that the nightmare caused making him violently sick. He laid with his head against the cold, hard porcelain of his bathtub, shivering violently and remembering the events of his nightmare in excruciatingly vivid detail.

He should never have booked that plane ticket. He should never have asked George to Skype. He had been stupid, so goddamn stupid, to think that George won't leave the second he sees what he looks like. It'll play out exactly like his dream—George will take one look at him, and his sunshine smile will transform into an expression of total disgust, and he'll take a step back away from Dream, absolutely repulsed by him. He'll catch the next flight back to London, and Dream won't even get a chance to touch him, won't even have time to say a simple hello. George will be gone as soon as he comes.

His headache slowly went away, but he didn't move from his spot until the bright light of a sunny Florida morning began shining through the small window in his bathroom.

He pulled himself up, dragged himself back to bed, and slept for seven hours.

When he woke up again, he didn't feel much better. He laid in bed for a half an hour before getting up and brewing a strong pot of coffee, running a hand through his messy hair.

He leaned against the counter as he drank his first cup of coffee, staring out one of the big windows in his apartment at the cloudless Orlando skyline. It had been weeks since it had rained—most of Florida was experiencing a horrible drought, but he doubted it would last for much longer. Hurricane season was approaching swiftly, and based on the things he read on Twitter, it sounded like that year would be especially bad.

It was almost like the weather was mocking him with its sultry sunniness. His mood resembled that of overcast skies and torrential downpours, but instead, he got cloudless skies and a high UV index.

He had stuff to do that day in preparation for George—he needed to go grocery shopping, he needed to clean his apartment, he needed to edit some videos—but instead, he moped around, watching a stupid baking show on Netflix and taking occasional naps on the uncomfortable couch

he bought from Ikea. He let George and Sapnap know that he would be away from his phone so he didn't have to talk to anyone, and he let the entire day go by.

He didn't sleep that night or the next, intrusive thoughts keeping him awake and preventing him from slipping into unconsciousness.

He woke up on Monday to a few texts from George, and it made him not eat breakfast.

George: Dream I see you tomorrow

George: I'm so excited

George: I can't wait

He responded that he was also excited and that he couldn't wait, but it was all lies.

He was productive that day, unlike the past two, going to the grocery store despite his extremely high levels of anxiety since George was arriving the following day. Even though he didn't think George would stay long after seeing his face, he wanted to be prepared.

He went on a walk as well, just because he was too keyed up to stay in his house, and when he got back, he got a text from Sapnap.

He'd just gotten out of the shower and tied a gray towel around his waist when his phone buzzed on his sink counter.

Sapnap: hey come on the SMP

Sapnap: George and I are playing with Tommy and Wilbur

Dream cocked his head, considering. He started to type out a 'yes,' before he caught a glimpse of himself in his slightly foggy mirror. In his brief look, all he could see was a big nose, thin lips, and the stupid cleft in his chin. It caused his heart to palpitate, panic making him slightly lightheaded. He shut his eyes, bit his lip to keep himself from crying, and then typed out a response to Sapnap.

Dream: not tonight, srry

He felt guilty after sending it. Their streams typically did better when he was on the server, which meant they generated more revenue, but this was for the better. He needed to start distancing himself from them, to soften the blow once George decides he doesn't want to be friends anymore, after seeing his face.

He left the bathroom in a hurry, avoiding looking at the mirror. He slowly got dressed, throwing on a pair of sweatpants and an old t-shirt. His phone buzzed on his bed. He picked it up.

Sapnap: Ok. You good?

The text made his eyes burn, and he looked up towards his ceiling, trying to force the tears back in. Sapnap's concern hurt for a reason he couldn't explain, and he cradled his phone to his chest, biting his lip so forcefully that it started to hurt.

Once he gained a semblance of control, he responded.

Dream: I'm fine. Just tired.

He closed out of his messages and went to his Postmates app, waiting as the screen loaded.

Maybe he'll feel better after eating.

He caught a glimpse of his reflection four times before his food got there, and each time it edged him closer to a full-on breakdown.

He saw himself in the stainless steel of his faucet, he saw himself in the metal of his spoon. He accidentally launched his camera on his phone and got a good look before he turned off his phone, and then saw himself again in the darkness of his screen.

After the fourth time, an idea popped in his head.

His food arrived, but he didn't eat it. Instead he let it sit on his kitchen counter, the tacos he ordered getting colder by the minute. He was too busy drawing a smiley-face on a paper plate with a sharpie, the lines unsteady due to his violently shaking hand. Once he was done drawing the face, he got the scissors out of his desk drawer and cut out two small circles for his eyes, before making two small holes on the side of plate. He got out two rubber bands from a different drawer and threaded through the tiny holes, tying them so that he could fit them around his ears.

Once he was done, he held his makeshift mask up and admired his work, blinking at it tiredly.

The smile was a bit off-center, and the circles for his eyes were uneven, but it would hide his face, so it would have to do.

He put the mask on, sliding the rubber bands onto his ears, and adjusting it so that he could see out of the eye-holes. Once he felt like it was properly on, he made his way to his bathroom to see it on his face.

He took one look at himself, and his stomach dropped to his feet.

The mask didn't cover his chin.

Okay, that's fine, he thought to himself as he stared at the small cleft in his chin, wrapping his arms around himself as he began to shake. *It's fine. I can go back to the store tomorrow before I pick up George and get a bigger sized plate, one big enough to cover my chin. They make bigger paper plates, right? Big enough to cover my nose and my chin and my mouth and everything else that is too ugly for anyone to see.*

His eyes filled with tears, and they slipped down his cheeks, hot and unbidden. His shoulders shook with sobs, and his breaths stuttered in his chest, an odd hiccupping noise escaping him. He tightened his arms around himself, his shaking hands gripping his t-shirt as he slowly slid to the floor, his back hitting the open door, which smacked the wall with a loud sound.

He pulled his knees to his chest and buried his face in them, gasping for air. He dimly registered that he was having a panic attack, but he couldn't hold a thought for longer than a second. His mind was racing too fast, awful things coming to the front and then retreating to the back, only for something equally as bad to surface.

His phone was buzzing in his pocket, and he took it out with a shaking hand. His vision was blurred with tears, so he couldn't see the caller, but he answered anyways, needing something to drag him out of the sea of panic he was drowning in.

“Heh-hello?” he managed, his voice so off that it barely sounded like him.

“Dream?” Sapnap said, and Dream’s face crumpled into a silent sob as his friend’s voice. “Hey, what’s up?”

“Sapnap,” he choked. “*Sapnap.*”

“Holy shit,” Sapnap sounded shocked, and there was the vague sound of movement on his end. “Are you alright? What’s going on?”

“I—” he broke off to take a breath, but the air got stuck in his chest. “I’m so fu-ucking *ugly*, Sapnap.”

There was a brief pause. “Dream,” Sapnap said softly. “You’re not ugly.”

“I a-am. And George is coming tomorrow and he’s going to ha-ate me,” Dream wept. “He’s going to take one look at me and go back ho-home and I’m not even go-going to get a chance to touch him and—”

“Dream, Dream—” Sapnap cut him off, his voice soft and steady. Dream clung to it like a lifeline. “Dream. *Clay.* Calm down, please. Take some deep breaths.”

Dream let out another sob, but then took a slow, measured breath. It stuttered out of his chest. He repeated twice more, Sapnap’s calm breathing on the other end helping him regulate his own.

“Any better?” Sapnap asked after a minute.

“A little,” Dream whispered. He lifted his mask off his face and put it on the ground next to him, before wiping his cheeks with his arm, tears smearing across his skin. He took another breath, trying to stop crying.

“You’re not ugly, Dream,” Sapnap said, after another short pause. “And I’m not just saying that because you’re my friend. I have never once looked at you and thought you were ugly. Ever.”

A shudder ran through Dream. “But what if George does?”

“George would never,” Sapnap responded instantly. “Never, Dream. I don’t know how you could think that. He’s the last person who would judge you.”

“Everyone judges,” Dream mumbled, wiping his eyes again. “Even George.”

“I promise you, he wouldn’t,” Sapnap assured him strongly. “And if I’m wrong, then I will deadass give you all of the money in my bank account.”

That made Dream let out a small laugh. “All of it? How much do you have in there, twenty dollars?”

“More like twenty thousand, asshole,” Sapnap retorted, and Dream laughed again. His tears had stopped, and though he was still shaking, it wasn’t as bad as before.

A brief silence fell as Dream stared at the discarded mask on the tiled floor. It was damp in places now, from where his tears had soaked through the paper, and the sharpie smile was smeared slightly. He ran his fingers across the surface. “I’m scared, Sapnap,” he admitted hoarsely. “If he stops talking to me after this—”

“He won’t. Come on, man, it’s *George*. Two weeks ago, he was on TeamSpeak crying because he

thought you were dead in a ditch somewhere in Florida. He was sad on the SMP today because you weren't on there. Dream, there is *nothing you could say or do to make George stop talking*—"

"I'm in love with him," he interrupted, unable to stop the words from spilling out. "Would that make him stop talking to me?"

"No," Sapnap refuted immediately.

Dream's eyebrows shot up. "You don't sound surprised."

"George may be oblivious, but I'm not. And you're not exactly subtle."

"I just realized this like two weeks ago."

"Then you're as clueless as George. I knew like a year ago."

Dream rolled his eyes. "Okay, great all-knowing love-guru, I didn't even have feelings for George a year ago—"

"You did," Sapnap sounded smug, and Dream wanted to punch him. "You just didn't know it yet."

"You're so annoying," Dream grumbled, and got up off the floor carefully, his legs shaking violently but successfully holding him up. He picked up his mask and tucked it under his arm. He looked at himself in the mirror, but it didn't cause the panic it did before. It just made him tired.

"I'm so tired," Dream vocalized, rubbing his eyes with his thumb and index finger.

"Have you been sleeping?"

"I got like an hour last night, and no sleep the night before. So I guess that's a no."

"Come on, man, go to bed. One hour over two days is just unacceptable."

"I know. I was too stressed to sleep."

Sapnap was quiet as Dream made his way to his bedroom. "Have you..." he trailed off, and Dream paused in the act of turning off his PC.

"Have I what?" Dream asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Have you ever thought about like... getting help for this?"

Dream's heart skipped a beat, and he took a breath. "It's not a—a problem, Sapnap. It's just a..."

"Dream, you called me having a *panic attack*. That's not... that's not *good*."

Dream swallowed. "It's just a thing. It's not usually this bad."

"Still—"

"I'm tired, I don't want to talk about this," Dream interrupted, and finished powering down his PC.

"Can't I just go to bed without having to think about my issues?"

Sapnap made a noise of displeasure at the word 'issues', but let it go. "Yeah, go to bed. You can call me tomorrow if you want, but I'm pretty sure you'll be so busy with George that you won't need to."

“He’s going to leave as soon as he gets here,” Dream muttered, turning off his lights.

“All of the money in my bank account he doesn’t,” Sapnap reminded him, and Dream crawled into bed.

“I’m holding you to that,” Dream told him, pulling the covers up over him. His next sentence was punctured by a yawn. “Those twenty dollars are going to be mine.”

“Go to bed, Dream,” Sapnap said, exasperated.

There was a beat, before he said, “We all love you. You know that, right? I love you, George loves you, Bad loves you, Tommy loves you, Wilbur loves you... you’re loved, Dream. Just remember that, okay?”

Dream shut his tired, burning eyes. “Yeah,” he whispered, his voice breaking. “Yeah, I know.”

“Good. Get some sleep, Dream. I’ll talk to you later.”

“Bye, Sapnap,” Dream murmured. “Love you.”

“Love you too, buddy.”

The call ended, and Dream let his phone fall out of his hands and onto the mattress next to him. He slid his arm under his pillow and rolled onto his side, more exhausted than he had ever been in his entire life.

Sleep took him within minutes.

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy. That was something, wasn't it? I hope you guys liked it.

It gets happier from here on forward, I promise. Also, I wrote the majority of this is one night, so that's something.

As always, feedback is much appreciated! See you guys next weekend!

Crash Into Me

Chapter Notes

Here it is, guys. The big one. I hope you all enjoy.
Big thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me out!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream's alarm woke him the next morning.

It was an alarm he had forgotten about, as he set it about a week ago, but he was brutally reminded when it went off, loud and jarring, startling him out of his peaceful slumber.

He groaned, searching for his phone without actually opening his eyes and clicking the power button twice, turning off the noise, seeking a few more minutes of sleep.

There was something, though. Something floating on the edge of his mind, preventing him from slipping back into unconsciousness, waiting for evaluation. But he couldn't remember, he was too tired...

His eyes shot open.

George is arriving today.

Shit.

He stared at his walls, his eyes wide open now, and his mind slowly started to wake up as his stomach began to hurt, a mixture of hunger pain and anxiety.

He pulled himself out of bed a few minutes later, deciding that laying there dreading the day was worse than him actually getting ready. He got in the shower, scrubbing his hair and his body before getting out and drying off, glancing at himself in the mirror as he wrapped the towel around his waist.

He clenched his jaw as a pit formed in his stomach at his reflection, his disproportionate features taunting him as he grabbed his razor, which was perched on the side of the sink.

He shaved methodically, first coating his chin and cheeks with shaving cream before starting on the right side of his face and ending at the left, trying to keep from looking at the damn cleft until he had to, when he shaved his chin. Once he was finished, he withdrew the small bottle of aftershave he had out of his medicine cabinet, put a little amount on his hand, and then applied it evenly to his face, the woody scent of it filling the room.

He didn't usually put on aftershave—the heavy fragrance gave him a headache usually, but since he didn't have much going for him in terms of looks, he hoped smelling nice would at least get him some points.

He contemplated what to wear for nearly ten minutes, practically ransacking his closet, before settling on his favorite pair of jeans and his soft green sweatshirt.

He knew it was far too warm for him to be wearing such a heavy garment, but for some reason, sweatshirts made him feel more confident, and he always wore t-shirts underneath if he got too hot. His green sweatshirt was also his favorite piece of clothing that he owned, so it brought him a little bit of comfort as well.

He went to the kitchen after he was dressed and saw the takeout he had ordered the night before sitting on the counter. A light sniff of the air told him that the food was definitely past saving, so he pulled a face and threw the several-hours-old tacos into the trash, before lighting a candle that his mom gave him, trying to get the smell of bad Mexican food out of the small space.

After he finished cleaning up, he made a hasty breakfast, frying an egg on a skillet and putting it on a piece of buttered toast, before sitting at his small kitchen table and eating while checking Twitter on his phone.

Things were relatively calm that day online, luckily. No scandals, no drama, no big celebrity deaths. He refreshed the trending page and saw that a tropical storm was forming in the Atlantic, and his eyebrows furrowed as he read an article about the storm, which they had named Oscar.

It wasn't a hurricane yet, so he decided he wouldn't worry too much about it. He hoped it waited until George was gone for it to hit, since hurricanes in Florida weren't exactly a pleasant experience. It meant that everything was closed for a few days and that the shelves at the grocery store were completely emptied of water and toilet paper. If it was bad enough, people starting evacuating, and then cars clogged the highways and he and Patches went with his parents up to where his grandparents resided, in South Carolina.

He closed Twitter and finished his breakfast, before cleaning up and sitting on the couch, anxiously flipping through channels.

George's flight didn't get in until one, and it was only eleven. He figured he'd leave for the airport around twelve-thirty, since the roads around Orlando International could get pretty congested and he didn't want to keep George waiting after a nine hour plane ride.

The waiting game was painful. He kept glancing at his phone to check the time, and because of this the minutes dragged. Each tick of the clock made him increasingly anxious, and he ended up watching more of the stupid baking show that he'd been watching on Netflix to distract himself. It didn't work—his attention kept drifting to the fact that he would see George, in person, in a few hours.

When twelve-thirty rolled around, he said a silent prayer of thanks that the awful wait was over and turned off the baking show, grabbing his keys off the counter and making for the door.

He stopped with his hand on the doorknob, however, before turning and going into his room to fetch the stupid, paper-plate mask he had made the night before.

He wasn't sure why he grabbed it, or why the thought of going to meet George without it made his heart rate kick up. He knew, logically, that it wouldn't do anything. He could barely see out of the thing, so it wasn't like he could just wear it the whole time George was there—not to mention his friend would undoubtedly tell him to take it off the second he saw him with it on.

Nonetheless, he had it clutched in his hand when he left his apartment, making sure to lock the door behind him.

There was a little traffic, but Dream still got to the airport in fifteen minutes. He paid to park near passenger pickup and waited anxiously in his car, his leg jiggling nervously as he tried to listen to his “happy music” playlist to calm his nerves, but the upbeat tunes just made things worse, so he ended up turning it to a random radio station. It still didn’t help his nerves any, but it was better than listening to The Black Eyed Peas sing about how great the night is going to be.

He stared out his windshield absently, elbow propped against the arm rest on the side door, head resting on the heel of his hand. He tried to keep from thinking about George for his own sanity, but he couldn’t keep his thoughts away from him for long, and each time he thought about the fact that he would be meeting him in a few minutes, a pang of anxiety rolled through him.

His phone buzzed at one-oh-five, and Dream’s heart jumped to his throat as he read the text.

George: just landed!! Getting onto the shuttle from the terminal

“Oh god,” Dream whispered, pressing his trembling fingers to his mouth, his vision going fuzzy for a moment. “Fuck. *Fuck.*”

His anxiety ratcheted up, making him out of breath and shaky, his heart pounding aggressively. He leaned his head back against the headrest of the driver’s seat, shutting his eyes as he forced himself to take deep breaths, trying to keep from hyperventilating.

It didn’t really work. He started to feel nauseous and his face was starting to feel numb, his breaths still coming too quickly. He looked wildly down at the mask, which sat on the console in between the driver and passenger seats. He stared at it for one panicked second, before he grabbed it and put it over his face.

For some reason, having it on calmed him a little bit. His heart was still racing and his body was still shaking, but he wasn’t on the edge of hyperventilation anymore. He took several deep breaths, one hand on his chest.

“Okay,” he breathed. “Okay. You’re good.”

His phone buzzed again, and his heart once again flew to his throat.

George: Waiting at customs, about to be at baggage claim!! Where are you

Dream swallowed.

Dream: Im in my car.ill mert yuo at pssenger picup

His hands were shaking, so the text was peppered with typos. He hoped George understood what he was trying to say.

George: Okay. I’ll probably be there in five

Dream: ok

He shut his eyes briefly, taking another deep breath, and got out of his car. His legs shook underneath him as he made his way towards passenger pickup, mask over his face and keys jangling in his pocket.

As he entered the passenger pickup area, which was a small, inside part of the airport with benches, he noticed that he was getting some odd glances from people, no doubt because of the paper plate with a sharpie smile he had over his face. His cheeks flamed red underneath the mask,

the sensation embarrassment adding to the array of emotions he was already experiencing.

He tucked his hands into his pockets, shoulders hunched forward, feeling horribly awkward. A man with a goatee outwardly stared at him as he walked by, and it made Dream want to tear the stupid thing off his face and leave, made him want to crawl into a hole and die.

But the thought of not having it on made him feel worse, so he kept it on.

More people began to shuffle out of the baggage claim area and into passenger pickup, and Dream's knees began to shake, his stomach turning with anxious nausea. His breathing was starting to get fast again, so he sucked in great, shuddering gulps of air, trying to keep from having a meltdown in the middle of the airport. He scanned the area for George, but he wasn't there.

A woman passed through the doors from baggage claim to passenger pickup, blocking the door as she looked around. Dream considered her, noticing the big Union Jack on her suitcase. *She must be from George's flight*, Dream thought, watching as a line started to form behind her.

The woman then moved so that she wasn't blocking the door, moving towards a man who sat on one of the benches, and behind her stood a skinny, brown haired man with—

George.

The first thing Dream noticed was that he was shorter than Dream was expecting, visibly shorter than six feet. The second thing he noticed was that he was wearing a cerulean blue t-shirt and dark jeans, black backpack on his shoulders, clutching the handle of his luggage in his right hand and holding a gray sweatshirt in his left.

He stepped aside to let people pass, his wide brown eyes searching the decently crowded passenger pickup area, white teeth sinking into his thick lower lip. Dream held his breath as George's gaze passed over him, before the shorter man blinked, and then looked directly at Dream.

An expression Dream couldn't identify passed over his friend's features, before George's face broke out into a small, shy smile, and he slowly made his way over to where Dream was stood, completely frozen.

He can see my chin, Dream thought wildly as George approached, but he was too frozen to do anything. *Oh god, he can see my chin.*

George stopped in front of Dream, his luggage rolling to a stop. He peered up at Dream's masked face with a look of intrigue, head cocked slightly. Dream felt like he couldn't breathe, his eyes scanning George's beautiful face—skirting across his straight nose, his pink lips, his soft brown eyes. There was a light dusting of freckles across the tops of his cheekbones, so faint that if the sun wasn't shining through the big glass windows behind him, they would have been invisible. His hair looked soft and thick, and Dream's fingers twitched as he briefly considered running his fingers through it.

He was prettier in person. It made Dream's brain stop working.

George met Dream's gaze steadily through the small holes of the mask, and Dream swallowed around his bone-dry throat, unsure of what to say or do. He opened his mouth and then closed it, searching for the right words.

What could he even say, though? 'Hi?' 'Sorry, about the mask, I hate how I look?' 'I think I'm in love with you?'

The staring contest continued for a few seconds more, during which George bit his lip, worrying it between his teeth, before looking away and nodding slightly, almost like he was making a decision. Slowly, his pale hand started to rise to where the rubber bands hooked the mask over Dream's ears, and Dream realized his intent immediately.

He was going to take the mask off.

His hand shot out to stop George before he even knew what he was doing, and his trembling fingers closed around his friend's steady ones, preventing him from going any further.

George's eyes returned to Dream's, and the older man gave him a small, reassuring smile—almost like he was silently saying, *'it's okay. I know you're scared, but you can do this.'*

He gave Dream's shaking hand a soft squeeze, and Dream swallowed again, his eyes stinging. George squeezed his hand again, his thumb gently running across Dream's skin, and Dream finally nodded, his jaw clenching to keep his eyes from filling with tears.

I don't want you to leave, Dream thought desperately as he slowly let his hand drop. *Please don't leave. Please just stay a little bit. Please just let me hug you before you go.*

George's thumb hooked under one of the rubber bands, sliding it off of his left ear, before repeating the process on the other side. He gently took the mask off, peeling away the last of Dream's defenses with it.

Finally, after four years of friendship, George saw Dream's face.

Dream was lightheaded as George's eyes skirted across his features. His gaze was more of a caress, rather than the harsh x-ray he was expecting, but he still felt like he was naked, all of his flaws put on display. He tracked George's eyes, watching as they examined his stupid nose, his thin mouth, his ugly chin.

George met Dream's gaze again, and Dream held his breath as he waited for the disgust to pull at George's lips, waited for him to turn around and walk back the way he came, waited for the inevitable let down—

But it never came. Instead, George's face broke out into the biggest, brightest smile Dream had ever seen, and then the shorter man was hugging him, pressing his face into Dream's neck and throwing his skinny arms around him.

Dream, completely stunned, hesitantly wound his arms around George's thin figure. He returned the embrace with reluctance at first, caught off guard, but after a few seconds he sank into the hug, pressing his face briefly into George's soft, clean smelling hair.

"Hi," George greeted happily, his voice muffled by Dream's collarbone. "I like your freckles."

Dream laid his head atop George's, noticing how well his slender body fit into Dream's, like pieces of a puzzle. Time passed, but Dream had no conception of it. It could have been seconds or hours that he spent in George's arms.

Eventually, however, he came to the realization that he was practically hyperventilating, face numb and body quaking against George's. He tried to take a deep breath, but it felt like someone had filled his lungs with cement, and the choking sensation it caused only served to make him feel more panicked.

"Are you okay?" George asked quietly, concerned, and Dream knew he could feel the trembles that

kept rolling through him. He was clutching George desperately now, his hands grabbing fistfuls of his blue t-shirt so tightly that his knuckles were white. "You're... shaking."

"S-Sorry," Dream managed quietly, struggling to speak. His head spun, his inability to breathe properly making him lightheaded. "I just... need a minute."

George didn't say anything, just hugged him tighter. Dream forced himself to breathe normally, trying to stop his body from shaking. He slowly began to breathe properly again, but he was still trembling when he loosened his death grip on George, releasing his t-shirt.

George let him go soon after that, removing his face from Dream's neck and looking up at him again, causing Dream's stomach to flip anxiously.

George's eyebrows raised, his forehead creasing. "You look like you're about to pass out."

"I'm good," Dream lied with a wan smile, feeling like he was about to faint.

"Let's sit down," George advised warily, his hand grabbing Dream's wrist and leading him towards the metal benches near the exit, dragging his suitcase with him. "If you faint, I won't be able to catch you without you crushing me. You're so much taller than I thought you'd be."

"I'm only six three," Dream protested faintly, letting George pull him down onto the bench. "Not my fault that you're a smurf."

George's jaw dropped, his pink lips forming an "o" shape. Dream's eyes flicked down to them briefly, before he quickly looking away, heat creeping up his neck. "I am *not* a smurf!" George protested shrilly. "I'm above average height!"

"Smurf," Dream muttered woozily, though sitting down was helping. He didn't feel as much like he was about to pass out anymore, but he still hung his head between his knees. "You and Sapnap are both smurfs."

George pouted, but then Dream saw that he started to smile again. "I can't believe I'm here."

Dream let out a soft laugh. "Yeah, me neither. I can't believe..." he trailed off, not wanting to ruin the mood.

"Can't believe what? That I don't care what you look like?" George asked lightly.

"Yeah, that," Dream acknowledged, and then let out a small, mirthless laugh. "I can't believe you haven't left yet."

George's mouth fell open. "You think I'm going to *leave*?"

Dream grimaced. "No?"

"You're such an *idiot*," George rolled his eyes. "I'm not going anywhere. You're going to have to kick me out when you want me to leave."

Dream's heart swelled in his chest, and his mouth twitched. He raised his head, and was pleased when his vision didn't swim. "You still owe me dinner, anyways."

"Exactly, so how can I leave if I still owe you dinner?" George said with a big smile, knocking his knee against Dream's. Dream grinned as well, noticing how his eyes crinkled and laugh lines formed around George's mouth when he smiled like that. It was incredibly attractive.

A brief, comfortable silence fell, during which Dream tried to get his body to stop shaking while staring off into space and George stared at Dream with an odd look of wonder in his eyes. Dream felt like he was scrutinizing him, and it was making him edgy.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” he asked nervously, feeling the urge to put his hood over his head. His mask was still clutched in George’s hand.

“I’m trying to figure out what your eye color is,” George told him, before seeming to catch himself. He blinked and looked away, color rushing into his cheeks. “Uh. It just looks yellow to me since, you know, color blind.”

Dream watched the blush form on George’s cheeks, his stomach fluttering. “They’re green. And my hair is blonde, though you can probably see that.”

“Yes, I can see your hair,” George smiled again. “I didn’t expect you to have wavy hair.”

“I didn’t expect you to be so short either,” Dream responded, trying to direct the conversation away from his appearance. He eyed George’s blue t-shirt. “Or for you to actually dress appropriately for Florida weather.”

“I googled what the temperatures were going to be, got really confused when I when I saw ninety degrees, and then converted it to Celsius.” George admitted. “America’s weird.”

Dream’s eyes flicked down to his watch, eyebrows raising when he saw that it was already one-forty-five. “Speaking of Florida weather, we should probably head out,” Dream said, before steeled himself and standing, locking his knees so that he wouldn’t fall. He was pleased to find that he was decently steady. He held out a hand to George, hoping to see the blush cross his face again. “You ready?”

It worked. George blushed prettily, before smiling and taking Dream’s hand, pulling himself up. He held onto Dream’s hand a second longer than he needed to, before dropping it like it had burned him, busying himself with collecting his things.

Dream smiled a little bit to himself, pleased that he had gotten the reaction that he wanted, and stood with his hand in his pockets while George grabbed his sweatshirt and his luggage, unable to keep his eyes from straying.

George had an extremely thin frame—he was bony almost, his shoulders broad but arms skinny. His legs were thin as well, but they were encased by dark denim, so he couldn’t be entirely sure how skinny. There was a dent in his hair, which he knew was from the headphones that George constantly wore. It made him smile.

George turned back to him when he had everything, his eyes bright and excited. He beamed at Dream, and Dream’s heart melted a little bit. “Ready when you are, Dream!”

Dream’s eyebrows raised. “You know, that’s not actually my name.”

George rolled his eyes. “I know, *Clay*. I can call you that if you want, but you’re Dream to me.”

George saying “Clay” instead of Dream made him cringe a little bit, so he shook his head. “No, Dream’s good. You saying Clay just sounds wrong.”

“Okay, Clay,” George teased, and Dream grimaced, turning and starting to walk towards the exit. George followed, the sound of his luggage rolling over the linoleum oddly loud. “Whatever you say, Clay.”

“God, you’re annoying,” Dream sighed, holding the door open for George, who grinned up at him as he passed. “I think you’re more annoying in person than you are online, I’m starting to regret this.”

George opened his mouth to respond, but then his face pulled in disgust. He frowned up at the sultry blue sky, squinting against the sun. “Ew. Why is the weather... sticky?”

“Humidity,” Dream responded distractedly, fishing his keys out of his pocket. “It’s what you get when you live in a sub-tropical climate. It’s not too bad today—typically, it’s worse when there’s a chance of thunderstorms, but there’s no rain in the forecast for today.”

“It gets worse than this?” George squeaked, horrified. “Oh god, I’m not made for the heat. I’m going to melt, Dream.”

“You’re not going to melt, George—”

“I *am*. You’re going to have to stick me in a freezer.”

“You’re so dramatic,” Dream rolled his eyes, unlocking his car. “We’re going to be inside a lot anyways, so you won’t even feel the heat. I’ve got AC.”

“Thank god,” George said reverently as Dream opened the trunk of his car. He helped put George’s suitcase in, and George put his backpack in as well.

Dream closed the trunk and watched as George wandered to the right side of the car, making to get in.

“Uh, are you planning on driving?” Dream questioned bemusedly, raising an eyebrow. George paused with his hand on the car handle for a second, looking extremely puzzled, before realizing what he was doing.

“Stupid America,” George muttered as he went to the left side of the car, getting into the passenger seat. Dream chuckled, finding George’s lack of knowledge of how things work in the U.S. incredibly endearing.

He got into the driver’s side, shutting the door behind him. He settled himself, adjusting his mirrors, and felt George’s gaze on the side of his face.

His cheeks colored and his stomach flipped anxiously. *He’s looking at me weird*, Dream thought nervously, freezing in the act of starting the car. *He’s probably noticing that my nose sticks out too far from the side, or that my chin is weirdly pointy. Or maybe he’s noticing how weird my ears are, or that my jaw line isn’t sharp—*

“Dream?”

George’s timid voice brought him out from his spiral, and he looked at his friend abruptly. George was looking at him, eyes soft and eyebrows furrowed in concern. “Are you alright? You’re... you’re squeezing your keys.”

He glanced down and saw that he was gripping the key so tightly that it was leaving impressions in his skin, and he began to loosen his hold. He took a breath, noticing that his heart was racing once more.

“Yeah, I’m good,” he sighed, sliding the key into the ignition and starting the car. “I’m good.” He felt the engine purr to life, and he immediately turned on the AC, moving the dial to the coldest

setting.

“Hey,” George said suddenly, and Dream looked over at him, pausing in the act of turning on the radio. George was smiling again—the sunshine smile that never failed to make Dream’s heart skip a beat. “I’m really, *really* glad to be here.”

Dream swallowed, his stomach fluttering.

George is here, Dream told himself sternly, *And he’s not leaving. He’s not going anywhere.*

Dream couldn’t help it—his mouth quirked into a small smile, showing the overbite in his teeth. “I’m glad you’re here too.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh boyyyyyy they're togetherrrrr. I'm literally so excited for what's to come, and I hope you guys are as well.

As always, feedback is much appreciated! I will see you guys next week!

You're The Only Friend I Need

Chapter Notes

This is a long one again, so sorry if you prefer shorter chapters, but here you all go! I hope you enjoy!

Thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me with this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The entire ride back to Dream's apartment, George kept sneaking looks at him.

They weren't long looks—just quick glances, eyes darting to Dream and then back at the highway in front of them or out the window to the side, making comments and observations about the city.

"I've never seen a palm tree in person before," George stated as they passed a cluster of them, lined up neatly along the avenue. He watched them go by, before his gaze flashed to Dream's face again.

It was setting Dream's teeth on edge, and he kept having to bite his tongue to keep from snapping at him. Thankfully, the midday traffic that he had encountered on the drive to the airport had cleared, and they got to Dream's building within ten minutes.

Dream helped George carry his things from the car and into the building, lugging his heavy backpack into the elevator and punching the button for the fifth floor.

"Jesus, what do you have in here?" Dream asked incredulously, dropping the backpack briefly and rolling out his shoulders. "Did you pack a bag of fucking rocks?"

"Now who's being dramatic?" George teased. "It's just my laptop and some streaming stuff, like my webcam and tripod and mic and stuff."

"I'm surprised this thing didn't snap you in half," Dream mused, hefting it back over his shoulders as the elevator dinged. "It probably weighs more than you do."

"Not all of us are giants," George reminded him, stepping into the fluorescently lit, carpeted hallway. "I'm surprised you don't hit your head on door frames."

"Ha-ha," Dream deadpanned. "Haven't heard that one before."

George giggled, and the happy sound made the corners of Dream's mouth automatically lift into a grin. George's giggle was one of his favorite sounds in the world—he couldn't *not* smile.

They stopped in front of Dream's apartment, and Dream fished his keys out of his pocket and unlocked the door, before stepping aside to let George in first.

George smiled up at him as he entered, cheeks slightly pink—clearly picking up on the fact that Dream was trying to be a gentleman. Dream closed the door behind the two of them as George's eyes flitted across the apartment, taking it in.

“What do you think?” Dream asked, stepping forward and laying a hand on the small of George’s back, unable to keep from touching him. George started slightly at the contact, stiffening, and Dream almost took his hand away, but then the shorter man seemed to relax, leaning into the touch.

“It’s nice,” George remarked. “I like your view.”

“It’s not that great.” It really wasn’t—his apartment looked over one of the many lakes in Orlando, and he got to see the sunrise, but it wasn’t like he could see the entirety of the city from the balcony.

He was actually glad that he couldn’t. Being able to see the whole city from his balcony was just terrifying, and his fear of heights was already set off by just being on the fifth floor—he didn’t know if he wanted to go any higher.

“It is! Look at the lake!” George gushed, pointing excitedly at the small body of water. “It’s so blue!”

“Yeah, it’s alright,” Dream mused, finding George’s excitement about where he lived incredibly endearing. “Not too bad for what I—”

“*Patches!*” George cried out, cutting Dream off completely and immediately falling to his knees, snatching up Dream’s cat and holding her close to his chest. Dream winced—Patches was a pretty tame cat, but he knew most animals didn’t like to be surprised, and George pretty much just grabbed her out of nowhere. He was expecting her to at least give George a warning swipe, and he opened his mouth to warn his friend about the likely possibility of getting a face full of claw.

He needn’t have worried, however. Patches was purring in George’s arms, rubbing her face against his t-shirt. George was giggling again, murmuring nonsense to the cat in the baby-like tone that he only reserved for small animals, babies, and Striders from Minecraft. Dream slowly closed his mouth, eyes wide as he watched George *snuggle* his cat, scratching behind her ears.

Never thought I’d be jealous of a cat, Dream thought sardonically as Patches pawed at George. He couldn’t help but smile, though—George with a cat was too damn cute.

“So, that’s my cat Patches,” Dream said lamely, sitting down across from George on the floor. “She seems to like you.”

“She’s the cutest,” George cooed, before getting smacked in the face with one of Patches paws. He blinked, before giggling again. “You *definitely* need to have a Patches cam on stream. Imagine how many more views you’d get.”

“Yeah, she’s a pretty girl,” Dream said fondly, smiling down at his cat.

He saw George look at him then, like he had in the car—just a quick glance at his face, but this time an odd expression passed over George’s face. Dream could be mistaken, as it disappeared as fast as it came, but it almost looked like sadness.

His stomach flipped, and a cold sensation washed through him. His smile immediately faded as he felt the urge to hide his face once more, feeling ashamed and disgustingly ugly. *Sorry that I don’t look like you were expecting*, Dream thought bitterly, swallowing. *I wish I looked different too.*

Patches leapt out of George’s arms then, and pranced over to Dream, rubbing her face against his knee. He petted her gently, his hand lightly shaking.

He wondered if George was thinking of leaving. He wondered if he was silently plotting an escape plan in his mind without Dream knowing. He wondered if he was waiting until the right moment to tell Dream that he couldn't take being around him anymore, wondered if he would come up with an excuse to hop on the next flight back to the UK.

The thought made Dream hopelessly despondent, and he suddenly couldn't look at George in the face. He kept his gaze on Patches, who was looking up at him with her big, hazel eyes.

He wondered if Patches could read his mind. It wouldn't surprise him if she could.

The silence of the room was broken by George, who suddenly asked, "So, where am I sleeping?"

Dream started, eyes darting up. George was looking at him, doe-like eyes wide. Dream swallowed, looking back down at Patches, stomach turning. "Uh... well, I only have the one bedroom, so you can have my bed and I'll sleep on the couch."

George blanched, jaw dropping. "No way! I'm not taking your bed!"

"You're my guest, you should get the bed."

"That's stupid. I'm taking the couch."

"George—"

"Dream."

The seriousness of the tone made Dream look up again, and he saw that George was looking at him, his expression one that Dream could only describe as a bitchface. "You're literally double my height. I'll take the couch, you keep your bed. It's fine."

An idea pushed its way into Dream's mind. "Or, you know, we could—" he cut off abruptly, his face coloring immediately when he realized that he was about to suggest that he and George both sleep in his bed.

He hated that he could imagine it so perfectly. George, fast asleep next to him, his pink mouth parted as he breathed softly. Their legs intertwined beneath the sheets, bodies pressed together, his face pressed against Dream's collarbone and Dream's face buried in his hair...

He had to take a minute to breathe, his body suddenly feeling too hot and his mind clouded with fog. He shook his head, trying to clear it.

"We could what, Dream?" George sounded confused, and a quick glance at him told Dream that his eyebrows were furrowed, his nose scrunched up.

Dream cleared his throat. "Nothing, nothing. I guess you can take the couch. I gotta warn you, though—it's not very comfortable."

"It's fine," George said, with a wave of his hand. "I've probably slept on worse."

Dream shrugged, before he changed the subject. "Anyways... what do you want to do? We can play Minecraft, we can go for a walk, we can go get food—"

"Food?" George interrupted, his eyes flashing with excitement. "Ooh, can we do that? I'm starving, I haven't eaten since this morning."

Dream grinned slightly. "Yeah, sure. I know of some good places."

“Yes!” George cheered. “Let’s go.”

“Alright, alright,” Dream placated, standing. “Let me feed Patches, and then we can go.”

—

After Patches was fed, the two of them left Dream’s apartment and took to the downtown Orlando streets.

It was suffocatingly hot, so Dream ended up having to take his sweatshirt off, despite wanting to keep it on. He pulled it off about three minutes into their walk, deciding that dying from heat stroke was a worse fate than feeling self-conscious.

George didn’t seem to even notice that he had taken it off, too busy swiveling his head back and forth to take in the sights of the city.

Orlando wasn’t the biggest city in the United States—not even close, in fact—but there *was* a certain grandeur to it. Maybe it was because of the various lakes scattered across it, or maybe it was the glass skyscrapers towering above the palm tree lined streets, or maybe it was the fact that Orlando was just *colorful*—even the most drab buildings were painted some vibrant, tropical shade.

Whatever it may be, Orlando was far different from any city Dream had ever been to. And based on the look of total awe on George’s face, it was unlike any city he had been to as well.

Halfway to their destination (one that was unbeknown to George—he had asked several times where they were going, but Dream had refused to disclose the location) they passed by a man selling an assortment of Disney items, and George stared at him as they walked past, eyebrows furrowed.

“Why is there Mickey Mouse everywhere?” George questioned, looking up at Dream.

“Disney’s, like, twenty minutes away,” Dream told him as they stopped at a street crossing. “Orlando’s super touristy because of it. People come from all over.”

George considered that. “I’ve never been to Disney world.”

Dream’s eyebrows rose. “Do you want to go?”

George thought about it for a second, and the small sign at the other side of the intersection flashed a white symbol of a figure walking, and they crossed the intersection. “Maybe. If we get bored one day we can go.”

Dream’s mouth twitched. “There’s also Universal Studios. Harry Potter World is there.”

George’s jaw dropped, and he stopped in the middle of the street, gawking at Dream. Dream startled, not expecting George to just abruptly stop, and he immediately grabbed his friend by his thin wrist and dragged him back to the sidewalk. “Jesus Christ, George,” Dream lectured exasperatedly, letting him go once they weren’t at risk of getting hit by a car. “You can’t just *stop*, people drive like maniacs in this city—”

“*Harry Potter World?!* ” George exclaimed, like it was the best thing he had ever heard.

“Yes, Harry Potter World,” Dream said, rolling his eyes fondly. “Would you like to go?”

“*Dream,*” George grabbed onto Dream’s arm, looking directly into his eyes. Dream’s mouth

abruptly dried up at the earnest look in George's eyes. "We *have* to go."

Dream's mind wasn't working properly. "Uh, yeah. Yeah, sure," he said dumbly. "We can go."

"Yes!" George cheered, his face lighting up. He then proceeded to question Dream about Harry Potter World, and by the time he was running low on questions, they had arrived at their food destination.

"Here we are," Dream said to George, gesturing at the building in front of them.

Located only a few blocks from his apartment was a small restaurant named *Cocoa Diner*. It had been there since the seventies and had remained largely unchanged throughout the years—the original owner had died a decade ago, and he had passed the diner down to his children.

It was a place Dream frequented, since it was close to where he lived, and the food was really good. He went there so often, in fact, that the waitresses knew him, and would occasionally give him free meals. It was nice—nice to feel known, in a city where nobody knew his name.

"Cocoa Diner," George read slowly, raising an eyebrow. "Interesting."

Dream opened the glass door, gesturing George inside. "After you," he said with a wink, grinning.

George's cheeks flamed pink, smiling shyly as he walked past Dream and inside the diner.

The inside was small and old-fashioned, like something straight out of a seventies movie. It was one of those places where part of the kitchen was actually in the main part of the restaurant, surrounded by a counter and barstools. There were booths lining the edges of the space, and various neon signs strewn about on the walls, along with other Orlando memorabilia. Both the floor and walls were tiled.

The diner was mostly empty, save for a scruffy man sitting at the counter, and one of the waitresses that knew Dream (a plump, sweet lady that smelled like a mixture of cigarettes and rose perfume) looked up from her task of brewing a pot of coffee when they entered.

"Clay!" She exclaimed, her thickly-accented voice warm and surprised. "Good to see you! Take a seat anywhere, honey, I'll be right with you."

"Thanks," he told her, smiling, and he turned to George, who was looking at Dream with wide eyes. Dream ignored the expression as he grabbed the shorter man by the wrist and led him to one of the booths.

Dream handed George one of the menus that were stacked in the middle of the table once they had sat down, but George was too occupied with staring at Dream. "She *knows* you? How?"

The waitress came over to them before Dream could answer, wiping her hands on the black apron she wore around her waist. "Hi Susannah," Dream said, smiling up at her.

"It's been a while since I've seen you in here, Clay," she lectured, laying down silverware for them. "I thought you'd forgotten about us."

"Never. I've just been busy," Dream shrugged, his eyes briefly flashing up to meet George's, and he was still staring. Dream swallowed, suddenly uncomfortable. His smile faltered briefly, but he glued it back in place when he looked back at Susannah. "Thought I'd stop by today, though."

"Glad you made that choice. Now, who's this handsome young man?" she turned to George, who

startled slightly at being addressed. He looked at Dream desperately for help.

“This is my friend George,” Dream said hastily. “He’s from the UK. He’ll be staying with me for awhile.”

“Nice to meet you, George,” Susannah said warmly, holding out her hand for George to shake.

George smiled at her nervously, and Dream cringed slightly at his awkwardness. “You too,” he said lamely, shaking her hand.

“Can I start y’all off with anything to drink? Coffee, soda, water... tea, maybe?” She asked, looking at George.

“I’ll have water,” Dream said, before gesturing at George with his chin. “George?”

“Uh... I’ll have a coca cola,” he said, looking up at Susannah. She smiled at him before leaving to go fill their drink orders, her heels clacking on the tile floor.

Dream felt self-conscious all of the sudden, so he kept his eyes on his menu, reading its familiar contents. George’s eyes were boring a hole in his head, however, and his stomach turned anxiously. Clenching his jaw, he looked up at gritted out, “Why are you staring at me?”

“They know you here?” George questioned, his eyebrows raised at Dream’s tone.

“I come here a lot,” Dream said, a bit snappishly. “The food is good, and I suck at cooking.”

“Okay, okay,” George held up his hands. “I was just curious. I didn’t know if she was a family friend or something.”

“No,” Dream said shortly, and the conversation ended. George looked at him a second longer, before he busied himself with looking at the food selection, lips pursed in conversation, and Dream gripped his own plastic menu in his hands tightly, suddenly feeling like a loser.

He didn’t have any friends in Orlando, so instead he befriended the middle-aged waitstaff of a diner, just to have someone to talk to.

How *pathetic*.

An intense feeling of self-loathing overtook Dream, and his appetite vanished with it. He set down his menu, suddenly feeling sick.

A few seconds later, Susannah came back with their drinks, setting them down on the table. “Alright, here y’all go—one water, one coke. Do the two of you need more time, or are you ready?”

“I’ll just take my usual,” Dream said, trying to smile at her. “Patty melt and tater tots.”

“Of course. And what would you like, sweetheart?” she turned to George, who once again looked alarmed by being called ‘sweetheart’ by a stranger.

“Uh, I’ll take a burger and... French fries?” he looked to Dream, and Dream nodded.

“Alrighty. I’ll get that going for y’all, it should be out in a few minutes.” Susannah left again, leaving Dream and George to sit alone, in silence.

Dream took a sip of his water, at a complete loss of what to say. He ran his finger along the wet

ring on the table, his stomach swirling.

“Sorry,” George offered, and he reached out and briefly touched Dream’s hand. “I didn’t mean to make you upset. I’m sorry.”

Dream’s skin tingled when George touched him, almost like a spark on a live wire. He met George’s soft, doe-like eyes, and he melted a bit. “It’s okay. I’m just being sensitive.”

“I shouldn’t have pressed, it’s my fault—”

“George.”

Dream reached out and grabbed his friend’s hand, holding it for a second. “It’s okay. Let’s just forget about it, alright? I’m just...” he slid his tongue over his teeth, thinking of the right words to say. “It’s just odd, that you’re seeing this part of my life.”

George looked down at their hands, his eyes wide, before he looked back up at Dream. “What do you mean?” There was a slight note of hurt in his tone, and Dream immediately rushed to explain.

“I associate you with the part of my life that I enjoy more,” Dream said quickly. “The online part, the fast paced part. I like being online with you and Sapnap and everyone else more than I like the parts in between recording sessions or streams, when I’m just kind of... here.” He had to swallow back what he was actually trying to say, the god honest, hard truth — the *I like the online persona I’ve created for myself more than I enjoy my actual self, because he’s interesting and popular and witty and impressive and I’m just... me. I’m just Clay.*

George seemed to think about that for a second, staring at their intertwined hands on the plastic table. “I think I get what you’re saying, but... I want to see all of your life, even the ‘boring’ bits. Because I don’t just want to know Dream, I want to... I want to know Clay, too.”

Dream’s throat tightened, and he couldn’t speak for a second. Instead, he just squeezed George’s hand tightly, trying to convey all of the emotions trapped in his chest through the small gesture. George smiled at him, and Dream gave a small one back, his heart fluttering.

He withdrew his hand after a few seconds more, the moment quickly ending. He cleared his throat, trying to find his voice again. “So, uh... other than Harry Potter World, what do you want to do while you’re down here?”

George immediately launched into an explanation of what he wanted to do and see while he was in the Sunshine State, and Dream sat and listened to him talk, resting his chin on the heel of his hand, his gaze flicking between watching George’s eyes and his mouth, completely mesmerized by the man in front of him.

In seemingly no time at all, Susannah was back with their meals.

She set down their plates, and the hot steam from their food wafted up into the air. Dream thanked her with a smile, and she left the two of them alone again.

As soon as she was gone, George attacked his food with vigor, shoveling fries into his mouth in between taking massive bites of his burger. Dream watched on in amusement, picking at his food. His appetite was still gone for the most part, but he knew he’d be hungry later, so he made an effort to eat.

George had cleaned his plate before Dream was even halfway done with his patty melt, and that was when George decided that it was a good idea to start taking tater tots off of Dream’s plate.

It started off with one—he snatched it off of Dream’s plate and popped it into his mouth quickly. Dream ignored it at first, but then George started taking more tater tots, quickly diminishing the taller man’s supply of them.

“Dude,” Dream exclaimed, after George took two at once. “If you take another one of my tots, I’m going to murder you.”

“I’m hungry!” George exclaimed. “And you’re not even eating them!”

“I’m saving them for when I’m done with my patty melt, dumbass. Don’t touch them.”

George muttered something under his breath, and Dream glared at him, while simultaneously trying his hardest not to smile. He was mostly kidding about George stealing his food, but it definitely got the reaction that he wanted. George pouting was just too cute.

A minute or so went by with no tot theft, and Dream thought the danger had passed, so he continued to munch on his sandwich.

Suddenly, George’s hand darted out to Dream’s plate, and he snatched up a handful of tater tots. Dream immediately reacted, slamming his fist down on George’s hand so hard that it rattled the plate and the table. George yelped, dropping the now smushed tater tots onto the table, cradling his hand to his chest.

“Dream!” George gasped, rubbing his hand. “What the hell, that hurt—”

“I told you not to touch my tots!” Dream scolded, but he was smiling while saying it. George was glaring at him, but his mouth was twitching as well, and soon enough, he was smiling as well.

Dream looked at the mess of squished fried potato on the table, and sighed. He grabbed his fork, scooped up some of the remaining tater tots, and put them on George’s plate. “For damages,” he explained, and George’s eyes lit up. “Next time, get your own fucking tater tots.”

George flipped him off and began eating his newly acquired food, grinning all the while.

Soon, Dream’s plate was empty as well, and Susannah brought the check over. Dream immediately snatched it up before George could even begin to reach for it, fishing into his pocket for his wallet.

“Dream!” George complained. “I wanted to pay—”

“Nope. You’re my guest, I’m paying.”

“I still owe you for the plane ticket—”

“And you’ll pay me back when we go out to a fancier dinner than this one night. Besides, you don’t even have American currency yet, idiot. How the hell are you going to pay?”

George scowled at him, but Dream gave him a smug look as he slid his credit card into the small book, setting it back down on the table for Susannah to take.

They were out of the diner within minutes, Dream promising Susannah that he’d be back in again soon. They started going back in the general direction of Dream’s apartment, as it was nearly five o’clock, and Dream had a feeling that the jet lag was about to hit George like a train.

And he was right — George started to get quiet about a block away from his apartment, a tell-tale sign that he was getting tired. When they actually got into the building, Dream noticed that his

friend was starting to physically lag as well, leaning against the metal walls of the elevator and letting his eyes drift shut for slightly longer than a blink.

“You tired?” Dream prodded gently, resisting the urge to reach out and casually touch his friend—he wanted to run his hand through George’s hair, wanted to gently grasp the back of his friend’s neck, wanted to guide him so that his cheek was resting against Dream’s shoulder.

But he didn’t do any of that. Instead, he curled his hands into fists and then shoved them into his pockets, fingernails biting into his palms.

“Mm...” George said sleepily, leaning his full weight against the wall of the elevator. “Didn’t get a lot of sleep last night.”

Dream’s fists tightened, every part of him itching to touch George. “Why not?”

“I was too excited and too nervous,” George said, opening one of his eyes and looking at Dream. “I was worried you’d, like, think I was annoying or something.”

Dream stared at him, suddenly unable to breathe. *And I thought you’d think I was ugly, and that you’d leave. I’m still in shock that you haven’t walked out yet.*

“You’re not annoying,” Dream said quietly. “I’m glad you’re here, George.”

George’s face lit up in a smile as the elevator dinged, and the two of them stepped out and made their way back over to Dream’s apartment.

As soon as they were inside, Dream began setting up the couch for George to sleep on while the shorter man got dressed into pajamas, pulling it out so that it became a small, makeshift bed. It wasn’t the most comfortable thing, but it would hopefully be sufficient enough.

He fetched one of his spare pillows from his bedroom, as well as a fuzzy gray throw blanket, and by the time Dream had fully set up the bed, George was out of the bathroom and dressed into pajama pants and a white shirt.

“I think you’re all set,” Dream told him, watching as George ran his hand through his hair tiredly.

“Great. I feel like such an old person, going to bed at five-thirty,” he laughed lightly.

“Hey, jet lag’s a bitch. Besides, our sleep schedules are crazy anyways, don’t worry about it,” Dream shrugged. He stood there for a second longer, watching George bend down and shove the clothes he had been wearing back in his suitcase, before he spoke again, feeling strangely awkward. “Alright, I’m going to go edit or something until I go to bed. Just, uh... just yell if you need anything.”

George stood straight and smiled at him, and even though his eyes were tired, his face still lit up. He walked around the couch, towards where Dream stood by his bedroom door, and for a second Dream thought he had forgotten something in the bathroom, so he made to move out of the way—but then George’s arms wrapped around him, and his forehead pressed against Dream’s collarbone for the second time that day.

The breath left Dream’s lungs in a whoosh, and he immediately returned the embrace, holding George close to him.

“Thanks for having me,” George said, his voice muffled. “I’m so fucking glad I’m here.”

Dream's throat was tight again, barring him from speaking, so he just held George tighter, savoring the fleeting moment while reveling in the perfect fit of the smaller man's body against his own, and letting himself imagine, for just a little bit, that George was his.

Chapter End Notes

Oooh, Dream's pining ~

I'm probably a little bit more than halfway through with this story, and can I just say thank you all so much for the amazing response it has gotten? As of posting this chapter, this fic has nearly 1500 kudos, 168 bookmarks, 17k hits, and it's the *third most popular fic* in the DNF tag based on kudos. Literally, *what??* I have no idea how or why I got to this point, but thank you all so freaking much for all of the love and support you've given this fic. It just boggles my mind that so many of you have read and enjoyed this, and from the bottom of my heart, thank you all so, so, so much.

By the way, if you want, you can follow me on Tumblr! I post small one-shot fics, as well as other DNF and fanfic related things. Here's the [link](#)

As always, feedback is much appreciated! I will see you all in a week with a new chapter!

It's Not A Problem, It's Just Something

Chapter Notes

This is late, so sorry! I was suffering from writer's block and then got quickly overworked with school. Sorry for the wait.

I hope you enjoy! ~

Thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me out with this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After George had gone to sleep (Dream checked about twenty minutes after George had gone to bed, and had found the older man passed out and completely dead to the world) and when Dream was safely in his room, he allowed himself a mild, ten minute freak-out before calling Sapnap.

His hand was shaking when he held his phone up to his ear, pacing around the room and listening to the phone ring once, twice, before—

“Hello?”

Sapnap’s voice was deep and scratchy, and Dream knew immediately that he had just woken up from a nap.

“Sapnap,” Dream said in way of greeting, unable to find the right words to convey all of the feelings churning inside of him. “Hey.”

“Dream?” there was the sound of springs groaning. “What’s going on?”

Dream swallowed. “Nothing, nothing. Just... thought I’d give you a call.”

“Well, that’s nice,” Sapnap yawned. “I take it my bank account is safe, then?”

Dream’s brows pulled together in confusion for a moment, before he remembered the stupid bet they had going. “Right. Yeah, you’re account is safe. For now.”

“Mhm, sure. How’s George, then?”

A thrill went through Dream, and his heart skipped a beat. “He’s—he’s good.”

“Oh? Just good?”

There was a teasing lilt in Sapnap’s voice, and Dream rolled his eyes. “Shut up.”

“Hey, I didn’t say anything, man. I just want to know how my two best friends are.”

Dream snorted, moving from where he was pacing to his bed, flopping onto it. “Right.”

There was a beat of silence. “Seriously, though, are you good? Everything alright?”

Dream chewed his lip. “Yeah. I’m alright. Today has been... a lot,” Dream’s mouth quirked up into a sardonic smile. “I think I’ve felt every emotion a human could possibly feel today. Every single one.”

“I can’t tell if that’s a good or a bad thing. How did the meeting go?”

Dream explained it to him, trying not to leave out any details, despite wanting to forget most of what transpired at the airport. He felt quite embarrassed about it all, now—the people who saw him wearing the stupid mask probably thought he was a lunatic, and he didn’t blame them.

“You wore a mask?” Sapnap questioned, sounding wary.

“Shut up, I know,” Dream sighed, rubbing his eyes. “I was... I don’t know. Hysterical, or whatever.”

“Dream—”

“I know, I know, I need help, I get it,” he snapped, temper flaring. “I know I’m fucked up, Sapnap, you don’t need to say it.”

“Hey, chill out, man, I’m not saying anything,” Sapnap said, reproachful. “I was just going to ask how George reacted, that’s all.”

Dream swallowed, anger fizzling out. “He... just kind of took the mask off? Like, he reached up and just... took it off. And then he, uh, hugged me.”

“Aww, that’s *adorable*,” Sapnap crowed, and Dream rolled his eyes again, smiling. “I feel like I’m a girl at a sleepover hearing stories about her friend’s boyfriend right now.”

“George isn’t my boyfriend, Sapnap,” Dream said immediately, before cringing.

“Uh-huh,” Sapnap said, obviously humoring him.

“Seriously. He doesn’t... he doesn’t think of me that way.”

Sapnap must have picked up on the poorly disguised pain in Dream’s voice, because he sobered up immediately. “Have you asked him?”

“What? No.”

“Maybe you should.”

Dream shot up in bed, eyes popping. “Absolutely not, are you *crazy*? I’m not trying to ruin a friendship here!”

“Alright, alright,” Sapnap placated. “Jeez, man, stop yelling at me. I’m just saying that you don’t know until you know.”

“I’m not going to ask. That’s dumb,” Dream dismissed, scowling. “And I can’t tell him how I feel either, so don’t even suggest it.”

“I wasn’t going—”

“It would just make things awkward. I’d not only have to tell him that I sometimes like men but also that I’m in love with him,” Dream picked at a thread on his comforter, his anger fading and despair replacing it. “It’s too much of a bombshell to drop on him, and I don’t—” Dream’s throat tightened. “I don’t want him to leave, so I don’t want to do anything that’s going to make him want to go.”

“He’s not going to leave, man. After the stream yesterday he was telling me how excited he was

about visiting you. He's not going to leave unless you tell him to go," Sapnap sighed. "I've gotta go, my shift starts in an hour. Are you good?"

Dream sighed. "Yeah, I'm good. I'm just... frustrated. And anxious"

"Yeah, I know. Just try and have a good time with him, okay? You guys both deserve it."

"I'll try. Thanks, Sapnap."

"Love you, man."

Dream smiled, rolling his eyes. "Love you too, Sapnap," he said lightly, a slight hint of exasperation in his voice.

The call ended, and Dream stared up at his ceiling, his smile fading.

A strange, bitter loneliness crept up inside of him, and he rolled over in his bed, staring at his walls.

The only thing that separates me and George right now is a wall, and yet I still feel lonely, Dream thought morosely, I thought him being here would make things better, but now I never want him to leave.

Dream sighed and got out of bed, dragging himself to his PC to edit a video, needing something to occupy his mind and hands.

George's departure date wasn't for another week or so, but Dream couldn't help but dread it's arrival. Despite it's rocky start, the day had been the one of the best Dream had in a long time, and he didn't want his life to go back to what it was—to bland, colorless days that just ended up blending together. George brought a vibrancy to his life that he was quickly getting addicted to, and he didn't want to go through the withdrawal when he would, inevitably, leave.

Dream thought back to what George said at the airport that afternoon, of Dream having to kick George out if he ever wanted him to leave. He wondered if that was true, or if George was just bluffing, or more likely, lying to make him feel better.

You'll find a reason to want to leave, Dream thought, his stomach clenching.

If it's not my looks, it'll be my personality. Just wait.

—

When Dream woke up the following morning, he was awfully crabby.

He woke up with a headache, which typically meant that the day was going to be a bad one. The sun was shining through his curtains, which indicated a not so great day as well, and he groaned into his pillow for a few minutes before getting up and stumbling out of his room.

He had forgotten George was there until he saw the older man sitting at his table, fully dressed and scrolling through his phone. The sight of him made Dream do a double-take, his still half-asleep mind struggling to catch up.

George looked up when he entered, and his face immediately broke out into a bright smile. "Good morning, Dream!"

Dream blinked at him for a second, before he smiled slightly, his dark mood instantly lightening.

“Good morning. How long have you been up?”

“Only an hour or so. I was really tired,” George said sheepishly. “I think I slept for fifteen hours, which is just crazy.”

“Damn,” Dream said appreciatively. He walked over to his fridge, intending on making breakfast, and he felt George’s eyes on him the whole time, tracking him.

He instantly felt self-conscious, the anxiety that was plaguing him the day before returning in full force. He glanced down at himself, at his outfit of gray sweatpants and an old t-shirt, and cringed. He should have showered and gotten dressed before he came out of his room... what the hell was he thinking?

He instantly shut the refrigerator door—perhaps with more force than he should have, because it made George jump—and stepped back. “I’m going to go shower and get dressed and then I can make us breakfast,” Dream said in a rush, stumbling over his words in his haste to get them out. “Or, we could go out. Whatever you want. I’m just gonna... I’m just gonna go get dressed.”

George was silent for a beat, his eyebrows raised. “Uh, okay.”

Dream’s face flushed, and he nodded once before he scrambled out of the kitchen, back into the safety of his own room.

—

Despite his reluctance to go back and face George after making an utter fool of himself, he took a fast shower and got dressed in a rush, not wanting to keep his friend waiting. He put on a simple graphic t-shirt and jeans before entering back into the kitchen, where George was still waiting.

His eyebrows raised when Dream entered, and Dream’s face turned red again. “Uh. Okay. Breakfast time. Do you... do you want to go out and get something, or I could make something, or...?”

George looked like he was trying not to smile, and for some reason, it irritated Dream. “I’m fine with whatever, as long as I get food.”

Dream bit down the snappy response he was going to make. “Let’s go out somewhere, then. I’m an awful chef, so unless you want eggs and burn toast...”

“Going out sounds good,” George said. “We have to stop by a bank so I can exchange some money first, though.”

“Alright,” Dream said, grabbing his keys. “Off we go, then.”

They took the elevator down to the lobby and then went into the parking garage, where Dream’s car was parked. They got in and Dream drove them onto the Orlando streets, navigating to the nearest bank.

“You drive fast,” George commented as Dream made a right turn into the parking lot of the bank. “It’s terrifying.”

“I drive efficiently,” Dream countered, and George rolled his eyes. “I’m a great driver, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You drive like a maniac,” George muttered under his breath as he got out of the car, and Dream

pulled a face.

“At least I *can* drive, unlike some people.”

“I’m legally not allowed to drive, Dream. Colorblind, remember?”

Oh, right. Well, Dream lost that argument. “Let’s just exchange your stupid money.”

The bank took a long time, and it irritated Dream. He tapped his foot impatiently as he waited for an elderly lady to finish exchanging her coins, wanting to yell at her to hurry up. He must have been scowling, because George put his hand on his arm and said, “Stop being impatient. We have all day.”

“People are taking forever,” Dream said moodily.

“It’s an old grandma. They tend to take awhile,” George told him, and Dream snorted, knocking his shoulder against George’s. George beamed up at him.

The lady tottered out of the bank a few moments later, and George was able to exchange his currency. They were back in the car within minutes, George’s wallet now full of crisp twenty dollar bills.

“Where do you want to go for breakfast?” Dream asked George as he buckled his seatbelt. He couldn’t help but admire his side-profile while he did so, observing his defined jaw and perfectly normal nose.

“I want pancakes,” George said, turning to look at Dream, which made the younger man snap out of the daze he had fallen into while looking at George’s profile. “Where can we get good pancakes?”

An idea popped into Dream’s head, and he grinned. “The International House of Pancakes, that’s where.”

“The *what*?”

“You’ll see,” Dream said with a smirk, and pulled out of his parking space.

—

“The restaurants in America are so strange,” George remarked as they were seated at IHop. “They all have like... a theme.”

“Having a theme gets you more money,” Dream shrugged, grabbing the menu that was sitting on the table and reading it. “They’ve got a shit ton of pancakes here, and that’s all that matters. Look, they even have one that looks like a face.” He pointed at George’s menu at the smiley-face pancakes, and George rolled his eyes, smiling.

He looked into Dream’s face as the younger man withdrew his hand from the menu, his eyes flicking from feature to feature. He maintained his stare a few seconds too long, and Dream instantly was uncomfortable again, unable to shake the feeling that he was being judged. He kept his eyes on his menu, his stomach churning anxiously.

The waiter came and took their orders, and Dream felt George’s eyes on him the entire time. A flush crept up his neck as the waiter left to get their drinks, but George’s eyes left his face and returned to his menu.

This kept up for the entirety of their breakfast outing. George would stare at Dream for a second longer than a glance, and Dream's stomach would immediately sink and he would grow self-conscious, the urge to cover his face with every glance.

It's all in your head, Dream thought after George stared at him for what felt like the millionth time. *He's not judging you. He said that he doesn't care what you look like.*

Their food arrived quickly, and they ate it just as fast. Dream was rapidly becoming anxious and edgy as well as irritable, and their conversation became stunted, Dream giving short responses and George quickly falling silent, sensing the tension between them. George tried to pay for the meal, but Dream shook his head and gave the waiter his own credit card, footing the bill once more. George looked like he wanted to protest, but then seemed to think better of it.

The car ride back to his apartment was strained too. George tried to make conversation, but Dream was too anxious, his spiraling thoughts making it difficult to focus on what his friend was saying. George kept stealing glances, like he did on the way back from the airport, and Dream's hands began to shake as he gripped the steering wheel, feeling like an exhibit at the zoo.

The elevator ride up to Dream's apartment was much of the same, George looking at Dream when he didn't think the taller man would notice. Anger began to rise within Dream, and he avoided his friend's gaze, trying his hardest not to lash out.

I get that I'm ugly, Dream thought bitterly as the elevator dinged, and they stepped out. *But you don't need to stare. Take a fucking picture, it would last longer.*

Dream's hand shook as he unlocked the door to his apartment, and it took him three tries to get the key into the keyhole. Once inside, he put his keys down on the counter and turned his back to George, wanting to curl up and hide his face.

"Dream," George said then, laying a hand on Dream's shoulder, but something within Dream finally broke, and he whirled around.

"What?" He snapped, letting his anger take over.

George withdrew his hand immediately, his eyes going wide as he stepped back. He looked incredibly confused, and if Dream wasn't so angry, he probably would have found it cute. "I was just—"

"Just what?" Dream fumed. "Just going to stare at me some more? I know I'm fucking ugly, but you don't need to stare at me like I'm some... some..." he cut off, throat thickening as his eyes suddenly began stinging. *Jesus Christ, get a grip. You're not going to start crying,* he berated himself as he blinked rapidly.

George's eyes grew, if possible, even wider. "Whoa, what? I'm not staring at you—"

"You *are*," Dream said, and his voice cracked. "You've been staring at me ever since you got here. I'm not a fucking zoo exhibit, George!"

"Dream," George sounded incredibly concerned, and incredibly lost. "I haven't been staring at you. I swear, I haven't." He put his hands up in a placating gesture.

Dream swallowed thickly, his eyes filling with tears. "You have been. You were on the ride back from the airport, and you were at dinner yesterday, and you were this morning—"

"Dream, Dream," George's voice took on a softer tone, and he took a step forward and laid a hand

on Dream's shaking arm. "I haven't been staring at you. And I swear, I don't think you're ugly at *all*."

Dream clenched his jaw, anger leaving him quickly. He looked down at George, his lip quivering. "Yeah, well. I do."

"You're not ugly," George said quietly. "Honestly, Dream, you're not. I haven't looked at you once since I came here and thought you were ugly."

A tear slipped out of Dream's eye, and he wiped it away hastily. George reached up and pulled Dream into a hug, and Dream pressed his face into George's hair, forcing himself to stop crying. His body was shaking lightly, small tremors that rocked his frame, and George held him tighter, like he was trying to hold him together.

"Sorry that I yelled at you," Dream apologized once he was sure his voice wouldn't crack or waver.

"It's okay," George murmured into his shoulder. "I didn't realize how much this affected you."

Dream snorted mirthlessly. "Me neither."

"I'm sorry that I upset you. Let me know if I do it again, okay? If I was staring at you, it wasn't intentional. And I think you're really nice looking, actually. Not ugly at all."

Dream shut his eyes. *God, I'm so in love with you.* "Okay," he whispered meekly.

They broke the hug after a few seconds more, Dream pulling away first. George peered up at Dream's face, smiling slightly, and Dream looked down at him, damp-faced and embarrassed.

"Let's do something fun," George suggested. "Something that'll take your mind off things."

Dream chewed his lip, thinking. "Well... there's this thing called Wonder Works that we could try. It's like a kind of crazy science-y thing full of weird stuff—"

"Let's do it," George said immediately. "And I'll pay for it. I haven't spent a single dollar since I've gotten here."

"No, you don't have to—"

"I'm paying, Dream. Now get your keys, we're going."

Chapter End Notes

Tbh, I'm not totally sure about how I feel about this chapter, but it's here. Sorry for making you guys wait, I had to write a huge fiction piece for my advanced fiction workshop in college and then just got super burnt out. I'm so overworked with school that I haven't had time to do much of anything other than homework. Hopefully it will slow down soon.

Like I mentioned in the last author's note, I do have a tumblr! I post updates about the fics I'm writing, as well as other Dream team related drabbles, and I'm now taking prompts! Here's the link: [Tumblr](#)

As always, feedback is much appreciated! See you all soon.

Crisp Trepidation, I'll Try to Shake This Soon

Chapter Notes

This is so late and kind of short, sorry. I hope you enjoy, nonetheless.
Thanks to my beta Ghost_Monkey for helping me with this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The rest of the day was filled with fun and laughter. He and George did end up going to Wonder Works, and they had a blast while there, even though the attraction was obviously made for children.

They went back to Dream's apartment and ate dinner (Dream attempted to cook, and while it went better than he thought it would, the chicken was still dry and the mashed potatoes oddly lumpy) and settled down for a movie (Dream picked the first Star Wars movie, since it was one of his favorites, and throughout the entire movie Dream couldn't help but feel the urge to pull George close to him, but he resisted) and then they both went to bed, George giving him a tired smile as Dream disappeared into his bedroom.

The following day, Dream woke to a notification on his phone from his weather app, informing him that there was a Hurricane watch in effect.

He groaned as soon as he had finished reading it, bummed out. He had been hoping that the storm—a category one hurricane now—would have waited to make landfall until George left, but it seemed like the system was moving faster than the meteorologists had predicted, and was scheduled to slam into Orlando the following evening.

He sighed, getting up out of bed and stretching, the good mood he had woken up with slightly dampened after reading the alert. *What poor timing*, he thought to himself as he gathered the clothes he wanted to wear that day. *Of course there would be a fucking hurricane while George is here. We're going to be stuck inside for at least a day.*

He walked towards the bathroom, clothes in hand, and he laid his hand on the doorknob, ready to open it, when suddenly it was wrenched open.

Dream stumbled backwards, caught off guard. His eyes flicked up, and stood in front of him was George, half-dressed and soaking wet.

The blood rushed to Dream's face at alarming speeds as he took in his shirtless best friend, who was (thankfully, for Dream's sanity) dressed in a pair of jeans, and clutching a gray t-shirt. Dream's heart leapt to his throat as their gazes locked, and George's eyes widened, his cheeks flaming pink. The gray shirt slipped out from between his fingers.

They stood there staring at each other for a second. Dream kept his eyes resolutely on George's rapidly reddening face instead of his pale chest, and George looked like he was suffocating slowly. The air between them was awkward, thick with unsaid words.

Make a joke, Dream thought desperately, his mind reeling. *Make a joke, make a joke.*

“You look like a drowned rat,” Dream said, his voice off and his tongue feeling fat in his mouth.

George swallowed audibly, his face so red that Dream was half worried his friend wasn’t breathing. “Uh,” George squeaked, his voice higher than normal.

Dream felt the situation spiraling out of his control again, and he quickly worked to lessen the awkward tension. “Can I get a shower now?” he asked George slowly.

“S-sure,” George stammered, bending down and picking up his shirt before moving aside, letting Dream into the bathroom. Dream moved past him, their arms brushing together.

“I’ll be out in a few,” Dream told him, and George nodded before turning around, beginning to pull his shirt over his head.

Dream snuck a look at his bare back before it could be covered, and saw that the fair skin on his back was littered with freckles, and that the back of his neck and the tops of his shoulders were the same shade of pink as his face was.

Dream shut the door with more force than necessary before leaning back against it, shutting his eyes and taking a deep breath. His heart was racing, his hands shaking. He allowed himself a moment of strange panic, before he started the shower and let the water warm up, his mind a mantra of, *what the fuck was that?*

—

After Dream was done with his shower, he went back out into the living space, where he found George sitting at the table, staring resolutely at his phone.

Dream swallowed nervously as he approached, worried that the same strange tension would still be there. “Whatcha looking at?” Dream asked, his voice too loud, and George nearly jumped out of his skin, his phone falling out of his hand and landing on the table with a thump.

“Jesus, Dream,” he exclaimed, laying a hand over his heart. Dream expected George to give him a look, but he wouldn’t meet Dream’s gaze. “You scared the shit out of me!”

“Sorry,” Dream shrugged, sitting down next to him. “What are you looking at?”

“Some article about the NHS,” George said dismissively, still not looking Dream in the eye.

Dream’s eyebrows furrowed. “Alright. Uh... do you want breakfast? I can make some eggs—”

“Sounds good,” George interrupted. “I’m pretty hungry.”

Dream nodded, staring at George full in the face and for once, wished that George would do the same. For days, the thought of George looking at him made his skin crawl, but now the only thing he wants in the world is for George’s eyes to be on him, rather than darting around his kitchen.

“Hey,” Dream said, laying a hand on George’s arm. The older man startled. “Did I... Did I do something wrong?”

“What?” George finally looked at him, his eyes wide. He stared at Dream for a second, before his eyes darted away again, his cheeks coloring once more. “No, no. You didn’t do anything. Don’t worry.”

Dream took George’s blush as indication that he was still embarrassed from earlier, and let the

subject drop. “Okay, just checking. I’ll make us some breakfast.”

George nodded, his gaze falling to his lap. Dream got up and walked over to the stove. He began to whip together a hasty breakfast, getting the carton of eggs out of the fridge and cracking four of them into a bowl.

“I suppose I should let you know,” Dream said as he hastily scrambled eggs. “We’ve got a hurricane watch. The storm should—”

“We’ve got a *what?*”

There was an odd note in George’s voice, and Dream almost turned around, before thinking better of it and dumping his raw, mixed eggs into the pan. “A hurricane watch. There’s a storm off the coast, it’s going to hit tomorrow night.”

There was a beat of silence, before George said, “Is that... is that bad?”

This time Dream did turn around, and caught the brief flash of anxiety on George’s face before it could disappear. Dream’s eyebrows shot up. “No, not at all. We get hurricanes all the time, it’s no big deal.”

George still looked unsure, but the tense set of his shoulders relaxed, “Alright, I’ll take your word for it.”

Dream watched him for a second longer, trying to get a read on how George was feeling, but his usually expressive face was strangely blank. Shrugging to himself, he went back to preparing breakfast.

“Hurricanes don’t really hit England, do they?” Dream said, running his spatula along the side of the pan to unstick the eggs from where they were clinging to the aluminum.

George snorted. “Nope, it’s way too cold. We barely get thunderstorms.”

Dream made a vague noise of acknowledgment as he divided the cooked eggs between two plates, walking back over to George at the table.

He set down one of the plates in front of his friend, and one in front of him. George said a quiet word of thanks before diving into his breakfast.

There was still a strange, awkward tension between the two of them, and Dream strove to lessen it. “We should probably hit the store today or tomorrow to stock up on some water, just in case we lose power.”

George looked up at him, seemingly forgetting that he wasn’t supposed to look Dream in the eye. “Does that happen?”

“More often than not. Hurricanes cause crazy wind, it knocks out power lines. My apartment has a generator, but only for essential functions, so the water and electricity will be out if it happens.”

George frowned, his forehead creasing. “I picked a terrible time to come visit.”

Disappointment washed through Dream, and he averted his eyes, not wanting to show George how much that statement hurt. “Yeah, well, sorry to disappoint,” Dream said moodily, stabbing a fluffy piece of egg viciously.

Suddenly, there were fingers on the back of his hand, and Dream looked up, meeting his friend's gaze. There was guilt hidden in his dark eyes, and his eyebrows were furrowed together. "Sorry. I didn't mean it that way. I just... I don't really like bad weather."

Dream forgave him instantly, the feeling of George's fingers on the skin of his hand oddly nice. He kept the appendage completely still, not wanting George to pull away. "Are you afraid of thunderstorms or something?"

George shrugged, his fingers unconsciously tracing the veins on Dream's hands. Dream kept his eyes on George's face, trying not to let his friend know that every touch of his skin felt like electricity. "I'm not afraid of them, I'm just not used to them. In Britain, we usually only get rain. Anything other than that is out of the ordinary"

"Fair enough," Dream said, and he couldn't stop his gaze from flicking down to where George was running his fingers over his hand, which caused the older man to immediately snatch his hand back, almost like he'd been burnt.

Damn it. Dream didn't mean to scare him away. He suppressed a sigh and watched as George's face colored once more. He was avoiding Dream's eyesight again, and the Floridian resisted the urge to roll his eyes. *George is so no-homo it hurts*, he thought, unable to keep from feeling a little bitter about that fact.

"Well, the hurricane isn't hitting until tomorrow, so we've got the whole day," Dream said then, pushing aside the odd feelings of rejection he was experiencing.

George chewed his lip. "What are you thinking of doing?"

An idea popped into Dream's head, and he smiled. "How do you feel about going to Harry Potter World today?"

George's eyes widened, jaw dropping comically. Dream grinned, his heart fluttering.

Maybe that will change your mind about Florida, he thought as he skewered another piece of egg and popping into his mouth.

Maybe it'll make you want to stay.

Chapter End Notes

So I watched the entirety of the TV show Spartacus, started the show Outlander, AND started writing a DNF one-shot in the amount of time that it took me to put out this chapter. Procrastination is my mortal enemy.

I'm not sure if I can keep cranking out chapters every week, since my course-load is really heavy and it's approaching midterms. Sorry :/

Also, if you want, follow me on tumblr! I post updates and fanfic snippets, as well as other cool stuff.

Follow me on Twitter as well, if you'd like! I would love to interact with you all there :D

[Tumblr](#)

[Twitter](#)

As always, feedback is much appreciated!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!